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TO

MY MOTHER

WHO BY HER SILENT SERVICE

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THE BEAUTY OF

SACRIFICE

'Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece.'
Zechariah ix. 13.

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INTRODUCTION

THE problem suggested by the opposing ideals of culture and self-denial is no academic one, but in some form or other is a very real and practical difficulty, which demands some solution from every one. Should a man obey his nature or thwart it, seek self-limitation or self-expansion? In some moods it appears to us as if the best attitude, as it is certainly the easiest way to peace, is to accept simply what seem the surface facts of our nature, and give up the long passion of the saints after the unattainable. Yet in other moods we recognise that life gains in dignity and solemn grandeur, when a man realises even once that for him in the ultimate issue there are in all the world only God and his own soul. We no sooner take up one of the positions than doubts pervade the mind as to its sufficiency. If we say that the secret of life is just to accept our nature, and seek its harmonious unfolding, immediately the question arises, whether self-culture is not only a subtle form of self-indulgence. If again we make renunciation the infallible method, we cannot keep out the question, whether it is not moral cowardice, that we refuse to live the larger life and to wield the wider power which culture seems to offer.

The counsels of the great teachers also are varied and conflicting on this problem. Some say with assurance that 'self-love is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting,' and that no human capacity was given to be renounced; others declare passionately, 'Thou must go without, go without—that is the everlasting song which every hour all our life through hoarsely sings to us.' Even if we do not trouble much about the general statement of the problem, and are not concerned about a plan of life that shall commend itself to reason and to conscience, we do not escape the many practical difficulties in many things on the border-line about which there is often no clear guidance, such as amusements, and our attitude towards certain kinds of art and literature.

Needless to say, the two voices represent the problem of all religion, namely, how faith stands to the world, with its ordinary life, and ties, and business, and pleasures. The problem varies with the ages with their different tone and quality, and varies even with each separate soul with its special temperament and environment, but it is an ever-present problem. If we are to follow Christ and do His will, what does that mean as to our relation to the common pursuits and human connections? Must we in any sense cut adrift from them, and even renounce the natural bonds which unite us to the general social organism of our day? Is renunciation the keynote of the faith, and the accredited method of entering into the fullest

Christian life? The problem comes to every earnest mind in some form or other; and nothing represents such a difficulty to young people as this, when they first respond to the claims of religion over their lives. What are they to give up of the many fascinating pleasures of the world? What are they to deny themselves, and why? If renunciation is the very root of the faith, is not the giving up of everything the better part? The Christian life is often presented to them in the great devotional classics as demanding the curbing of every instinct and the sacrifice of every natural joy. The thought cannot but arise, if the way of the cross is the way to life, the more complete the sacrifice, the better. Should not the ideal then be, whether we can realise it or not, rigorous mortification, even complete withdrawal from the entanglements of the world?

On the other hand, is not the very existence of powers and capacities a tacit argument for their development? Can self-denial be an adequate ideal, in face of the overwhelming natural instincts which demand satisfaction?

Both sides seem to represent facts of human nature and of history, and claim to be considered in any complete plan of life. This book is an attempt to do justice to both, and to find a great reconciling thought which may combine both, while at the same time it saves them from the inevitable failure which awaits them when each is taken by itself.

'Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece.'

CHAPTER I

ZION AGAINST GREECE—THE PROBLEM STATED

TWO opposing methods present themselves to us as the secret of life, which may be indicated by the words, self-expression and self-repression; or the method of Culture and the method of Restraint. They are usually set against each other in irreconcilable opposition, making a clear line of cleavage inflexibly dividing history and life: on one side the method of the world which appeals instinctively to man, the full-blooded gospel of the natural joy of life; on the other side the method of religion, with its pale and bloodless creed, with the essence of its doctrine popularly summed up in the rule, that the whole duty of man is to find out what he does *not* like and do that. The one is the life of nature, a broad and beaten path which invites the feet, where the self is enriched by all the manifold experiences of the way; the other is the selfless life, and its eternal symbol is a cross. The watchword of the one is perfection through joy; of the other, perfection through suffering. The contrast can be elaborated and extended in many ways — and exaggerated, for that is what it usually means;

but we cannot leave it in this hopeless antinomy. Such clean-cut divisions are usually artificial, and as a matter of fact we find on both sides facts of human nature and of experience, which are assuredly facts, and cannot be left to stand in isolation. There must be some point of reconciliation, some higher unity, which combines them both. There is indeed a line of cleavage which divides men, but it is one of spirit, and not of method. The failure of each of the methods by itself shows that there must be some solution, or at least that the contrast has been wrongly stated.

This latter is certainly part of the explanation; and we can easily see the strong temptation to exaggerate one of the sides at the expense of the other. A narrow and partial view of truth always leads to error in the statement of even the one side; and much more is this the case when we are dealing, not with theories of truth, but with life itself, where the difficulty is increased by the disturbing elements of temperament, inclination, passion, and all the moral temptations which menace life. Thus, it is natural to meet from the side of culture the temptation to make the desire for self-expression the most unblushing selfishness, and to meet from the side of religion the temptation to enthrone a morbid form of self-repression as the ideal, and to trample on the legitimate claims of the other. In either case we suffer from a partial view of the facts of human nature, as when we find

culture traversing all the lower reaches of man's powers, and refusing even to consider the higher sphere of the spiritual; or when we find religion depreciating things which are the very glory of the race, in the strange thought of honouring God by denying some of God's gifts to men. We must be willing to suffer the fate of all mediators, who see the truth on both sides, and who refuse to become partisans. The two extremes appeal most readily to men, and so there is seen in human history the strange rhythmical tendency, which makes an epoch alternate with its opposite, a time of reforming zeal succeeded by a period when the fire seems burned out, licence following restriction, and *vice versa.*

The instinct which seeks self-expression is innate in us, and no theory, economic or religious, can destroy the individualism of man. 'I am I' is the first equation of all knowledge; for it is the statement of self-consciousness. It is often asserted that progress is towards similarity and social equality, and it is true in a sense that progress will mean something like equality of opportunity; but it is far nearer the truth to say that progress is towards divergence. The higher the life, the greater is the complexity of function, and this is the case with society as well as the single organism. Even equality of opportunity in education only develops individuality, and creates difference. Many amiable attempts have been made to eliminate the *Ego* from

man by external means, but they could only succeed by eliminating man himself. Being such persons as we are, with this craving for self-expression and self-satisfaction, it is to be expected that at all times there should be a philosophy which teaches the duty of satisfying the instinct. This philosophy has sometimes been stated in very unworthy forms, in morals an Epicureanism which easily became the grossest self-indulgence, in economics a scramble of competition, every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. The besetting danger of all efforts after self-expression lies on the surface. Self-love is a root-principle of human nature, but when it is seen degraded, and running riot in animalism, a protest becomes inevitable. But the philosophy, which takes account of the natural demand of our being for self-satisfaction, can be set forth in high and refined forms.

Culture is an attempt to do this from a high standpoint. It declares that the purpose of life is that we should come into the full realisation of our powers; and this is to be achieved, not by limitation, but by expansion, by obeying our nature fearlessly. It carries with it the sacred duty to develop all the faculties, to train the mind, to attempt to reach a complete and well-balanced state of existence, to become all that it is possible for each individual to become. It is the duty of a man, not only to enrich his nature through all the experiences and from all the sources possible, but

to use these as opportunities to unfold himself without fear and without doubt. Emerson, who was an idealist in every fibre of his mind, and could have no sympathy with any form of moral laxity, preaches this creed with intense earnestness. In some of his essays, notably the one on Self-Reliance, he asserts the right and duty of the individual to live his own life to the best advantage. 'Trust thyself,' he is ever saying; 'no law can be sacred to me except that of my own nature.' He protests against conforming to any custom, or tradition, or prejudice, that would hinder full self-realisation. He protests even against the idea that a man must be consistent with himself, in so far as anything in the past would be a restraint on present self-expression. 'Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day.'

This demand for self-expression seems to justify itself by its success, and by its necessity for greatness in any branch of activity. 'Be yourself' is the first lesson of every teacher of every art, and the last lesson also. The mere imitative artist, without distinctive creative power, who only repeats past forms and types, is a cumberer of the ground. Art is vital, not mechanical, a putting forth of the inner life, not an exercise of technique. Art demands from her disciples that they should be original in the true sense, that they have made

their own the truth they utter in whatever form, so that it come forth formed by their mind and personality, coloured by the red blood from their own heart. The teaching of culture in the great art of living is similar,—Be yourself; express yourself; become what you may be; reach out to your possibilities; live the fullest, richest life you may.

Over against this there is the other method, which claims more distinctively to be the religious method, that of self-repression. It sees that selfishness is the bitter root of life, and that the efforts of man after self-expression have often ended in a revel where all evil passions have been awakened, and that men have failed utterly in reaching even happiness by their eager search for it. So it makes sacrifice the secret of life. Not the masterful men, but the meek, inherit the earth. It carries the war into the enemy's territory, and asserts that even for a rich vital culture the gate to self-knowledge is self-distrust. The sanctuary of truth is only entered by worshippers. For success in work there must be genuine self-repression; a man must lose himself in his work, or his very shadow will prevent him from reaching the highest. Self-conscious work, especially in art, is bad work. To be his true self, a man must suppress himself; to be a perfect instrument of high thought, to be in vital correspondence even with nature, there must be suppression of impulses and sensibilities, which only dim the mirror through which truth reflects itself to us.

All these considerations make it natural that, when the world's philosophy of satisfying self has failed, the other extreme should be tried. It glorifies self-denial, and points resolutely to a strait gate and a narrow way, and does not hesitate to denounce as self-indulgence the aim of culture, to perfect the nature by the varied channels which the world affords. Only in sacrifice is life perfected. It speaks of restraint, denying oneself, and giving up, cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye. In the passion of sacrifice it seems to make the ideal an emasculated life, anæmic, impoverishing the nature, cutting off the sources of joy, reducing the scope of the powers, and narrowing down the whole horizon. It is the way of the cross, and to the eye of culture it looks like madness, ever meddling with the free play of human instincts, ever silencing the voice of nature, leaving a poor mutilated life. Not 'Be yourself' is the watchword, but Give up, go without, renounce the natural, put a check upon the normal and spontaneous outflow of vital energies, tame and subdue the high heart of man.

The two theories are vaguely called by the names of Hellenism and Hebraism, as suggesting the two great streams of influence, which have made modern Europe what it is. The names are not quite appropriate, though we can see how it came about that they should have such a significance. The words,

which have suggested the title of this chapter, are taken from the Prophecies of Zechariah, and seem to imply that the particular section of the book in which they occur must in all probability be dated near the closing era of Old Testament religion. In the early prophecies, Greece is hardly ever mentioned, and only as one of the far-away heathen countries at the ends of the earth from Israel; for of course at that time Greece did not really exist for the Jews, and never came into contact with them. The peoples, which then loomed large in the horizon, were Egypt, and the Asiatic Empires of Assyria and Babylon, and latterly Persia. These each in turn represented the scourge of God for poor Israel, the hammer that broke them, or the anvil on which they were broken. With none of these great world-empires could Israel cope, and all that she could ever hope for was to be let alone, and be left to work out her own higher destiny. The struggle for Israel was not that of war, but a struggle to preserve her own peculiar treasure. Each external conflict, through which the Jews came, was only part of a deeper problem, representing a sorer internal conflict, to keep from being lowered down religiously to the level of paganism around them.

In the decay of the Persian Empire the opportunity came for Greece, which brought her into contact with Israel. Alexander the Great began his wonderful conquests in Asia, beginning with

Syria, where he took Damascus, Tyre, and Gaza; then conquered Egypt and founded Alexandria; and then overthrew the great Persian Empire, and ultimately carried his arms to India. Everywhere he was irresistible, and swept huge armies out of his path, overturning the crumbling Oriental empires. It boded no good for Israel, so far as national hopes went. To the prophet the mighty Greek conquest meant only the old story of danger and menace to Jerusalem, with which past records were full. We have said that the great danger, which ever threatened the true Israel, was the danger to religion. Foreign rites and worship and faith, a lower type of religion, and a lower level of life, were ever being forced on the people from without, and easily found allies to support them from within. The danger to religion became greater when, as was the case with Persia and Greece, a very attractive and dominating civilisation was added to the military ascendency. Especially was this so with Greece, which then stood for culture, and all that makes for knowledge, and beauty in art and poetry, and grace in life. Alexander's great conquests were not merely military. He established Greek colonies and Greek kingdoms all over Asia, and extended the Greek language and civilisation. All this represented a force subtler, and more insidious, and more difficult to combat, than mere brute force of arms. The Jewish people were in spite of themselves drawn into contact with the great influences, which

sprang from Greece, and which were changing the world. Alexander's dream was to found a universal empire, which would be held together by unity of language and civilisation. The great intellectual force, which Greece represented, was to weld the diverse nations of Asia into one. That is why he took such care to plant Greek colonies everywhere. Wherever his armies passed, there followed the establishment of Greek cities, to saturate the whole East with Hellenic culture. It was a bold scheme, which showed Alexander to be a great statesman, as well as a great soldier; and the scheme was to a large extent successful, as is seen from the place which towns like Alexandria took in the future of the world. All over Asia Minor these Greek influences were specially powerful, and even in Palestine itself Greek ideas grew so strong, that there arose a fierce struggle among pious and patriotic Jews against Hellenic culture. The network of Greek cities all around Israel exerted a constant influence to break down the exclusive religion of Israel, as well as the exclusive manners and customs.

Out of this struggle arose the two parties among the Jews, so much heard of in the ministry of Jesus, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees, largely composed of the upper classes, affected not only the Greek language, but also the laxer religious views and practices of Greece. Hellenism was eating like an acid into the fabric of the old Jewish

faith, and if allowed would have destroyed all essential distinctions between the religion of Israel and the paganism of Greece; but the very attempts, both from without and from the Sadducees within, to accelerate the gradual infection of Greek culture, brought about a revival of Jewish feeling; and this revolt against the dominant Hellenism of the time was largely carried out by the Pharisees. In a true sense they were the legitimate successors of the reformers of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. That work, which was then begun, of codifying and establishing Jewish law and making the Jews religiously more exclusive than ever, was necessary and inevitable, and really meant the idea of a Church within the nation. The Pharisees exaggerated it, and made the rules, which had been formed to preserve the faith, vexatious and in the long-run even harmful to true religion. Their ecclesiastical regulations swallowed up the plain precepts of the moral law; but all the same the Pharisees were the saviours of the state, and were the patriots of the troublous time of the Maccabean wars. They were narrow and bigoted, and were what we would call the obscurantist party, opposing the culture and light of Greece; but the Sadducees, who were broader minded, and who were tinged with Greek art and literature, and advocated the introduction of Greek customs, were lax and irreligious, and had ceased to be true Jews without becoming even decent Greeks. To fall thus between two stools is always the special danger

of the broad-minded party. It would have been a calamity beyond words, if Israel at this time had been wiped out as a force of religion: the time had not come when she could afford to cease to be exclusive. She had her contribution to make to the world, and had to be kept select after Ezra's somewhat external fashion. She had to give to the world religion, which could take the culture of Greece, and afterwards the power of Rome, and elevate and inspire them. The Hellenising influences were needed to prepare the way for the coming of the great Reconciler, who would make religion life, and make life religious for both Jew and Greek; and the fanaticism of the ultra-Jewish party, with its stern legalism and exclusive creed, was needed to guard the deposit, till the fulness of time had come. But the struggle was fierce, and at one time, just before the rising under the Maccabees, it seemed as if the Hellenising party would carry everything before them, and sweep the old Jewish faith of the prophets, and martyrs, and saints, out of the land. Fiercer than any mere struggle of arms was the struggle of ideas, and the words of the prophet had a keener significance for the time to come than their first meaning, 'Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece.'

The part which these two small countries played in the history of the human soul was conditioned by their history, and even by the geography. Among the strongest antipathies of the Jews, amounting

almost to terror, was that of the desert and of the sea. Though originally a nomadic race, whose natural home was the desert, they had learned to dread it, as the 'great and terrible wilderness.'[1] Their long wandering in it, their privations and struggles before they were securely planted in Canaan, burned in on them hatred of the pathless, arid waste. Drought was the constant menace of Palestine, but in the desert drought was chronic: the desert could swallow up a river, as it swallows up Abana the river of Damascus, and still have its thirst unappeased. Israel dwelt always on the confines of the desert, in a land that seemed to be snatched from its greedy maw, and never could forget it. On the other side was the sea, but with a barren, forbidding coast. There are no creeks and inlets, no promontories or rivers or bays, that afford a natural harbour. A ledge of cliff runs along almost unbroken, with no place where a great port could be established, and it is nearly always a lee shore, as the prevailing winds are westerly. The sea to the Jews on that side was the end, the unknown, and was accepted as the limit of their possible dominion to the west,—'As for the western border, ye shall have the great sea for a border.'[2] The charm of the sea, its joyous fascination, was unknown to the Jews. It was a limitation due to geography.

How different this is from Greece, which has

[1] Deut. i. 19.

[2] Num. xxxiv. 6.

given its name to the rival power, which contests the dominion of the heart and mind of man with the Hebrew. Greece is cut up into promontories, and peninsulas, and bays, and islands,

> The sprinkled isles,
> Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
> And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps 'Greece.' [1]

The Greeks were born sailors, open on every side to the intercourse of foreign nations, susceptible to all varied influences, which helps to explain their lightness and charm of character, their free, joyous views of life, their wide culture, which blossomed into art and literature. They represent the highest development of man through intercourse with men; while the Jew was shut in by the desert and the sea, to work out his destiny with God, to grapple with the problems of the moral life. So, from Greece came art and poetry to the world: from Israel came religion. When the time came, the sea would be the great means of communication, as the Greek language itself also was, for turning the world into the kingdom of God, but meanwhile the sea was the great barrier to keep the treasure from being lost. When Greece by wisdom was failing to find out God, a few tribes forced out of the desert, and beaten back by the sea, were learning on the hills of Canaan the laws of God, which are the laws of life.

Israel and Greece have stood for the two great forces that have moulded Western history, and still

[1] Browning, *Cleon.*

dominate modern life. They have usually been stated as opposite principles, waging endless warfare against each other: Hebraism representing the sterner view of life as duty, righteousness, the demand of a higher law; Hellenism representing as the ideal an easy, harmonious development of all the natural instincts and capacities of man. Before the age of historical criticism, St. Paul made the distinction, so specially emphasised in our day, between the Hebrew spirit and the Gentile, particularly the Greek, spirit, when he says that the Gentiles followed not after righteousness, but that Israel did follow after the law of righteousness.[1] Whatever might be said about the Jews, it could not be said that levity and carelessness were their characteristics, or that they were indifferent to moral issues. There was a strenuous earnestness in the race, so that Hebraism has been aptly enough incorporated into our language to stand for the serious view of life as a discipline, the conception of true happiness lying along the line of duty, and self-control, and sacrifice. St. Paul, even when recording their failure, bore them witness that they had a zeal for God.[2] History fully bears out St. Paul's contrast between the Jew and the Greek. The Jews did understand that God requireth righteousness as indispensable for life. The law flashed out its solemn warnings before their eyes. The necessity for righteous living, as an article of faith, was more truly theirs than any other

[1] Rom. ix. 30, 31. [2] *Ibid.* x. 2.

people's. The sense of sin, the need of redemption, the lawlessness of human nature when it is not under subjection to the law of God, the necessity for restraint of even natural powers and impulses, are all postulates of the Bible.

With the Gentiles it was not so. In Greece the highest form of pagan life was reached, and there life was designed on the plane of nature. There was a frank worldliness, the acceptance of the visible world, making the best of it in every sense, so that the art of living was carried to its furthest point. The cross, and the message of the cross, might be a stumbling-block to the Jews, with their glowing hopes of a Messianic King; but St. Paul knew well that to the Greeks the cross could only be foolishness,[1] with their keen zest of life, their pride of knowledge, their love of the beautiful in nature, their whole conception of morality as the harmonious development of the powers existing in man. Greek life was run on a totally different level, where a portent like the cross was sadly out of place. Not self-sacrifice, but self-realisation was the highest word of Greek thought. Every natural impulse was justified, and had the sanction of religion, and even had a special deity assigned to it. The highest human aim came to be the cultivation of the natural, the beautiful, the graceful in the world and human life, the due balance and harmony of all the powers and capacities of man, the fulfil-

[1] 1 Cor. i. 23.

ment of the whole nature, the development of all sides of life. Pagan religion was nature-worship, the worship of what is, not the vision of the glory and holiness of God which drove the Jews to their knees. Sin therefore was not the transgression of a holy law, but merely the failure to make the most of life.

The contrast can be worked out in detail in many lines, but it is evident how the two ideals differ, and how it is true that Zion must be against Greece. The one stood for Religion, and the beauty of holiness: the other for Culture, and the love of beauty. The one was sensitive to the moral purity of God, and therefore to the moral sanctions of life: the other was sensitive to æsthetic beauty, and therefore to the natural glory of life. Hebraism adored, and glorified God: Hellenism deified the world, and glorified man. So that, unless the morality of the Decalogue, with its restraints and repression of the evil taint in human nature, and unless religion, as the prophets of Israel conceived it, were to be lost to the world, the conflict of the two opposing ideals could not be avoided. Hebraism therefore stands to us for moral discipline; Hellenism for the culture of the human, the sensitive love of the beautiful, and the joy of living.

We are tempted to make this antithesis more absolute than it really is. In such a hard-drawn contrast there is omitted on the one side the higher

morality of the Greek philosophers and poets, in spite of its manifest imperfections, and the more spiritual conception of the divine which they attained; and also there is omitted the practical reaction against the popular religion and the popular moral standard, which was made by the followers of Pythagoras, a reaction which included strict asceticism of life, as well as mystical speculations. And on the other side the contrast is stated, as if all the art, and literature, and intellectual advance were found only in Greece and not in Israel. It is true that the Jews never did show any proficiency in the plastic arts, a characteristic which they have shared with the Semitic race generally; but the Jewish religion fostered arts like architecture, music, poetry; and their sacred literature in all its varied forms, narrative, prophetic, lyric, dramatic, judged even as literature, is unrivalled for sublimity and for power over the mind and heart of man. There is omitted also the tremendous intellectual advance to the whole people, caused by the monotheistic creed of Israel. This is seen most markedly not only in the prophets' condemnation of idolatry as moral evil, but in their derision and scornful laughter at it as grotesque ignorance. The intellectual superiority of their attitude is too palpable to be missed, as for example in Elijah's mockery of the frantic Baal worshippers, 'Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure

he sleepeth, and must be awaked,'[1] words which cut deeper with their keen edge of scorn, than the knives and lancets, with which they cut themselves. A striking proof of the mental superiority of Monotheism is the attitude of Judah in the exile, when the feeble nation, broken by the barbaric might of Babylon, having lost everything but her faith in the One God, held her head high in scornful pride, as she dwelt captive among idolaters. There is no more piercing satire in literature, than that of the prophet's description of the making of a god—the planting of an ash-tree; the felling it when grown; the kindling of a fire with part of the wood to roast meat on, and with the rest of the wood making a god to grovel before; the smith fashioning it with hammers, fainting with the fatigue of working it on the hot coals, the carpenter carefully measuring his part of the work with a rule, using compass and planes.[2]

The idea of One God is on a level of thought, high as the heavens above the idea at the root of Polytheism; for it gave unity to the world, and to man, as well as to God. A moral law, universal in its working, binding for all, and binding even for God, is impossible in a system with many gods of varying temperament and conflicting principles, as everything would depend on the special character and tastes of the particular deity, whose influence was supposed to preponderate in any given time

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 27. [2] Isa. xliv. 9-20.

and locality. The basis for moral conduct is taken away, if it is even conceivable that a thing could be right in one place and wrong in another, right for one deity and wrong for another, right even for the same deity at one time and wrong at another, if he can be persuaded by gifts and prayers and sacrifices to make right wrong on any occasion and for any consideration. We know in the direction of human affairs that many masters end in confusion, and we can imagine the moral confusion introduced by the conception of Lords many and Gods many, who ruled over a distracted earth. Faith in one God was needed before consistency in the moral life of man was possible. The world is indebted to the Jews for the moral law, not merely the Ten Commandments, but the *idea* of law, the possibility of any commandments, based not on caprice or external authority, but on the eternal essence of things.

The result of this moral advance was an infinite intellectual advance also, which brought reason and order into the world. There could be nothing but mental confusion, so long as the universe was supposed to be governed haphazard and by piecemeal, here the domain of one deity, there of another. Consistent thought about nature, or human history, was impossible; and so we find the great thinkers of Greece striving to express the idea of unity. While not renouncing polytheism, they sought to introduce order; some by conceiving of a God who

was above the other gods as a sort of ultimate appeal; others by imagining a dread impersonal power like Fate, which even all the gods had to obey; others denying that the gods interfered with the world at all. Science in its modern sense had its birth in Monotheism. The idea of the uniformity of nature, which is the first principle of science, was impossible till the human mind swept aside the intellectual confusion of Polytheism, and through the conception of law saw the world to be consistent, with unbroken continuity. Jewish religion is the cradle of science. This intellectual superiority, which was not confined to an isolated thinker, as might be the case in Greece, but which belonged to the nation, needs to be taken into account in all the contrasts, which are drawn between Hellenism and Hebraism.

For all the reasons stated above it is seen that these contrasts are usually overdrawn as history; and this particular contrast, which we are specially considering in what may be called their various theories of life, has also been exaggerated, and is only borne out by special definitions of the two terms to suit the particular thesis; but there is enough truth in the opposition to make it worth stating. The contrast is exaggerated, as if they were irreconcilable opposites, as if there could be no higher unity which could combine the two. As a matter of fact they must be combined for a complete

solution of the difficulty they undoubtedly represent; for they are both facts of human life. Still the contrast is a true one so far as it goes, and represents a division among men, which lasts to this day. There are the two types of mind, to whom one or other of the alternatives makes its insistent appeal. The two forces seem to play shuttlecock right through history, dividing epochs and men. They are seen rather as tendencies, than as deliberate theories, formulated completely and logically carried out; but even as theories they are ever to be found, and seem fated to stand apart, though we do see them sometimes fused together in more or less measure in a great man like Dante or Spenser or Milton, or even in a great epoch like the Elizabethan, the fruit of the twin forces of the Renaissance and the Reformation. But almost always one of the theories appeals more strongly to each of the two families of minds, and men seem to fall naturally into one of the two great parties. We find it in literature and art, as well as in theology and practical life.

The one speaks in the name of religion and asserts that the highest life is reached through sacrifice, and therefore advocates stern self-repression as the true method. It appeals to the heroic vein, throws contempt on all the things of earth, and deliberately refuses them for the sake of the deeper life of the soul. It glows with unearthly beauty in its divine passion of renunciation. It bases its verdict on the

experience that all forms of worldliness, however refined and cultured, end in disillusionment and despair, and can never satisfy the deep heart of man. The doom of death is on them, open, as they are like other earthly treasures, to the bite of the moth and the waste of the rust; so that even the perfecting of one's own existence by the ordinary means of culture, though it may be free from all gross evil, is a barren task, unworthy of our exclusive regard. Everything must be sacrificed to the soul. The way to save the life is to lose it, to give it up, to throw it away in the devotion of a great aim. Men thrill, as they have ever done, to the high passion of the counsel. It has made saints, and martyrs, missionaries, and philanthropists. It is indeed at the root of all religion, that a man should not count his life dear, and should sit loosely to all worldly possessions, and when the call comes should be willing to give up all that the world counts most precious. The story of Buddha, with its voluntary renunciation, driven by the sting of soul and by divine pity for suffering men, has false views of God and of human life, but it has a heart of truth in it, and the instinct of the race pronounces its majesty.

On the other side, calmly waiting for its opportunity, is the opposite method, which speaks not of self-repression but of self-expression. It bases itself quietly on the natural instincts and needs of man, and makes as its ideal the healthful outgoing of all the activities of human nature. These suggest and

determine the life man was meant to live, so let him live that life fearlessly, unfolding himself as best he can. The soul is larger, it declares, than the ascetic would allow, and has room for all the world of beauty, and thought, and art, and knowledge, which man has been conquering for himself through the centuries. The ascetic method, if carried out logically, would make life colourless, and would result in the loss of individuality, and therefore in the loss of the highest capacity of service. Besides, it is an impossible ideal for all men; for if rigidly pursued it would bring society to an end, and the race itself to an end. The natural ideal, says this calm voice—calm because it knows what weight of facts is on its side—is a fully developed and all-round health of the whole individual. It has support not only from the nature of man, but from the teaching of religion, which points to perfection as its end; so that culture can be even made a religious duty, and it has certainly often been elevated into a religious cult. The strength of its religious appeal is felt in the question, Are we not called on to make the best of God's gifts to us in nature, as well as in providence? It cannot be that having eyes we should refuse to see, and having ears we should refuse to hear, and having brains we should refuse to think, and having capacities of work and joy we should refuse to exercise them.

And so the two tendencies, which we can call Hebraism and Hellenism if we will, oppose each

other, and make their clamant appeal to us all. The controversy is perennial, though its forms change. The problems which divided men into Cavalier and Puritan have lost their point to us to-day, but the distinction made then finds copious illustration in every stage of human history, and the same swing of the pendulum from the Commonwealth to the Restoration can be paralleled again and again, though not perhaps in such dramatic completeness. There must be some solution of the seeming antithesis; for wherever one side has full sway, unhindered by the other, it only prepares for a strong reaction. This is so conspicuous in history, and is such a regular phenomenon, that it seems as natural as the systole and diastole of a rhythmically pulsating vessel, like the heart.

Florence, when dominated by the preaching of Savonarola, became transformed; high-born ladies threw aside their jewels and finery; men turned from evil ways into sobriety and godliness of life; all the forms of devoted piety were observed, the churches were crowded with all classes of the people from nobles to peasants, dishonest tradesmen under the awakening of conscience restored ill-gotten gains; the Carnival, which before had been an occasion for unbridled passions, wild revelry, drunkenness, and debauchery, became almost like a fast instead of a carousal; the famous burning of the 'Vanities' took place, when men gave up to the flames all books and pictures calculated to have an evil influence, all

carnival masks and costumes, and things associated with the old orgies; the very children were turned into instruments of the good work, going through the streets in procession, singing hymns, and collecting money for the poor—and then the tide turned, and, when Savonarola was in the crisis of his struggle with the pope, almost the whole city rose against him; a mob attacked his convent of San Marco; and the great Friar went to his martyrdom, with the sorer martyrdom of his heart at the thought that all his work was overturned.

In the individual life also it is common to find a similar revolt from the strictness of early training, and from a crabbed, narrow faith. Just when life seems completely confined by a cast-iron system of repression, there comes a revulsion of man's intellect to freedom, which too often degenerates into licence.

The Renaissance was, among other things, a reaction against asceticism; as the Reformation was also in a more religious sphere, the recoil of the heart from a system that crushed healthy instincts. A theory, which made duty consist in uprooting the innate powers, must provoke reaction; and sooner or later the instinct of beauty, which is native to man, will find outlet. The Renaissance was the swing of the pendulum long held back, and its very excesses were due to the previous excess. If men rushed from the old discipline and rigid *régime* to the other extreme of licence, it was the expected result at the breaking of the bonds which formerly

held them; just as the licence of the Restoration in England, after the iron hand of the Commonwealth was removed, is explained in the same way. At the Renaissance the new delight in nature, in art, in all the beauty and charm of the world, burst the bands of the old theory of life. Interest in the rediscovered classical literature, the revival of learning, all the varied culture of Humanism, came with the enlargement of mind, which saw the world and life to be larger in their many-sided interests than the mediæval Church had allowed. In the ferment of the time, painting, architecture, literature opened up new worlds, and with these manifestations there appeared also a new love of natural beauty. Petrarch's description of the Valley of Vaucluse would have been impossible in Italy before his time. Sometimes the revival degenerated into naturalism in its gross forms, when men threw aside all restraints, and the excess brought its own revenge to the destruction of art itself; but Humanism, as it appeared in history, was an inevitable reaction from asceticism, and illustrated once more the old lesson that the nature of man cannot be thwarted and distorted with impunity.

These then are the two opposing elements, plainly traced in broad lines in history, both of them facts of human nature clamorously appealing for recognition, but it is not easy to do justice to both sides, either in a philosophical theory which will give each

its proper place, or as a practical solution for the respective difficulties each side creates in our own daily lives. It is easier to take sides, to call Savonarola a fanatic monk, who tried to plunge the Renaissance back into the gloom of the Middle Ages; or to exaggerate the grotesque side of Puritanism, as Butler does in Hudibras, and Scott does with the Scotch Covenanters, underlining the scrupulosity of the precision, and the passion of the fanatic: as on the other hand it is easier to assume that every cavalier was a roystering swaggerer; or to mock at the pretension of all forms of culture, as if to sweeten the surface of life were the same as to save it; or to sneer at all attempted revivals of Hellenism in our own time, with their æsthetic crazes and endless affectations. It is useful enough that the faults and failures of both sides should be pointed out; but mutual recriminations, which end there, do not help much towards a solution. The first principle of any attempted irenicon between the two forces, represented by Zion and Greece, is that it must include both, as can be proved from the undoubted dangers which beset each of the two tendencies when left to itself.

Culture is tempted to be blind to the tragic facts of human nature, and to smother the soul in external forms and objects. This carries with it also the constant danger of moral relaxation; for if all that is in man only needs unrestrained development, life can be made, as it has often on

these lines been made, a dance of devils. Even if this moral catastrophe be avoided, culture, separated from the serious temper of religion, grows shallow, if not base, in its tendency. With all possible grace and charm, a literature which has lost touch with strength and seriousness dwindles into frivolity or grossness.

The opposite danger on the side of religion is a morbid introspection, which dwarfs life and leads to atrophy of the natural powers. All wilful mutilation of life, all refusal of the wide and spacious inheritance to which we have been born as men, is tacit unbelief. It throws the whole providence of God into confusion, to make nature a satanic contrivance, as if it were outside of the divine government. The ideal thus must include both elements, each being needed to save the other from the defects of its quality. If the Greek spirit is needed to broaden the life of a people, the Hebrew spirit is needed to deepen it, and indeed to give it the solid foundation, on which alone beauty can be permanently built.

CHAPTER II

THE ÆSTHETIC IDEAL—CULTURE

It may seem like pronouncing on the futility of culture at the very start to associate it with the very word æsthetic, as giving a dog a bad name is a preparation for hanging it. It is, however, with no controversial intention we use the word, but partly because the name need not be relegated to an unworthy use, and partly because of the difficulty of finding a better word. Æsthetic, from its derivation, means perception, or what is perceptible by the senses, but it is narrowed further to apply to the science of beauty and to matters of taste. In its best sense it means the love of poetry and art and all works of imagination, demanding a cultivated mind to appreciate the shades of beauty in these subjects; and, while culture may claim a wider sphere, still it chiefly works by means that may be called æsthetic, seeking to ripen, and sweeten, and enlarge our appreciation of the best things in the world and human life. In its worst sense the word has an unfortunate suggestion of affectation and pose, implying a super-

fine and exaggerated devotion to petty details on the surface of art, and a supercilious contempt for the practical affairs of the world.

The word culture itself does not escape this difficulty of having various meanings. It too has been debased to mean the same sort of affectation and pedantry, as if it stood for the multifarious scraps of information about literature and art, which are accepted as passwords by the select cliques. Addington Symonds[1] complained that a reviewer of one of his books sneered at him for travelling round Europe with a portmanteau full of culture on his back, and this set him to reflect that his reviewer must have had a different conception of culture from himself, and must have imagined it to consist of certain select views about art and pieces of literary information, which could be hawked about the country as a pedlar takes his pack. This is a common enough view, for which some apostles of culture, who rave periodically about some obscure picture or some newly discovered book, are responsible, a view which has become so ingrained in the public mind that it is difficult to speak seriously of culture and the aims of culture at all. But in spite of the deterioration of the word in popular usage, the thing it stands for is too important and vital to be dismissed with a sneer.

In addition also to this varied use of the word there is still another element of confusion in the

[1] *In the Key of Blue*, p. 195.

fact that, besides its natural uses in the unmetaphorical sense, culture can mean either a process, as in the phrase the culture of the mind, that is, its training, or it can mean a product, the result of the process, as when we speak about a man of culture. In the first case it suggests the machinery of education, the appropriation of learning, a system by means of which the understanding and the taste are cultivated; and, as it is a common failing to exalt the means unduly, this is how the suggestion that it is something artificial has crept in. Professor Seeley[1] is so concerned about this that he thinks it a misfortune that those who say 'culture' do not say instead 'religion,' since culture does certainly convey the idea of being merely a direction given to the development of life, while religion is the principle of life itself, and he is jealous for the honour and high place of culture. We shall see[2] that this would be to denude religion of its hitherto recognised significance, and would be piling upon culture a weight of meaning its foundation could not bear, and would leave it, like a pyramid, standing on its apex. It must be content with its honourable position as a force that gives a very effective direction to life, and is a very valuable instrument of religion. In this chapter, in which we speak of its great value and the truth that is in it as an ideal, we will see how it moves to some

[1] *Natural Religion*, Part II. chap. II.

[2] *Vide below*, chap. IV. 'Culture as Religion.'

extent concurrently with religion, reserving to a future chapter any consideration of its weakness, and the causes of its failure when taken by itself.

Culture begins with accepting the Christian ideal, which aims at perfection of life, and thus, with all its incompleteness, it is in some form necessary to every man who has ideals at all. It emphasises the duty, which a man owes to himself to be what it is in him to become, the duty to use all means to attain a full development of all his powers. It includes, therefore, the careful cultivation of every capacity, the ripening of the nature by the slow processes of growth, the effort after self-realisation which produces artists in every sphere of creative energy. It is the conscious training, in which a man makes use of every educational means within his reach, feeding his inner life by every vital force in history and experience, and so adjusting himself to his environment that he shall absorb the best products of the life of his time, thus making his personality rich and deep. Starting from this high ground, it is not enough to wave it aside with a reference to the lowest types of the cult, the terrible prigs it has fostered, the superior persons who speak mellifluously of sweetness and light, and who look with contempt on Philistines; or to the æsthetic coteries, who worship the bizarre and the uncommon, who rave about the ethical value of blue china and white plates of Nantgarw, and hold strong opinions about Botticelli, or somebody else, according to the

prevailing fashion; the elect people who have the only true views about wallpaper and Oriental rugs. It would be easy to refer to the crowd, which sham culture has let loose 'to rave, recite, and madden round the land.' That would be the poor device of the controversialist, who takes the weak exaggerations of those he marks out as opponents, and transfixes them with his easy scorn.

In cheap sneers at culture we forget that every great man has set it before himself in some form or other, and that it is no broad and flowery path on which a man can gaily walk, but a narrow one through a strait gate. We forget that it was not a light task, for example, which Goethe presented to himself, when he made it his aim in life to develop his every capacity, till he died, after a long life of strenuous mental activity, with the words on his lips, 'More light.' What has made Goethe the representative man of culture was that he resolutely set aside all extraneous interests, and calmly gave himself to his engrossing idea; that he was, as Mr. Hamilton Mabie puts it in one of his cultured and suggestive essays, 'a man who discovered in youth that life ought not to be a succession of happenings, a matter of outward fortunes, but a cumulative inward growth and a cumulative power of productivity.'[1] We forget also the moral qualities involved in the tremendous course of study, which a man like Gibbon set before himself as preparation for the writing of the *Decline*

[1] *Essays on Nature*, p. 15.

and Fall of the Roman Empire. It is a long and arduous task to master even a branch of literature; for it requires not only almost sleepless toil to overtake the immense field, but also asks for imaginative reconstruction of the historical conditions, and sympathetic insight into the character and temperament and situation of the various authors, before their place in the republic of letters can be determined. And most of all we forget that, whatever follies may be committed in its name, culture as an ideal means a vision of unrealised perfection, and a steadfast pursuit of it, demanding intelligent grasp of the laws of growth, and resolute self-mastery, and unflinching effort.

It comes even with a religious force to a man, who feels the sacredness of life, and realises his obligation to make the most of life in the best sense. Most of the failures of life are due to want of a real aim; we pursue our course so much by drifting rather than by sailing. Men are so concerned about *living*, that they lose sight of *life*. The act of living, the means of living, the details of living, absorb us almost exclusively, and we rarely try to co-ordinate all our scattered activities into a large consistent plan. Of course we have petty practical plans, such as to make a position in our profession, to make money in our business, or to get pleasure in our life, but as likely as not we have just drifted into these plans also. With all our activity in living, the great judgment of life goes against us by default. As far as the indi-

vidual is concerned, the nett gain of life must be a gain in character; we are judged, even by men in the long-run, not by what we get but by what we become; the fruits of life are seen, not in what we have, but in what we grow to. If this be so, we need a large plan with some more pretensions to philosophical completeness than the small partial aims we set before us. It must take into account the whole life, every part of our being, every power and faculty. Man has a duty to himself, to attain and preserve the integrity of his whole being. He has certain gifts, capacities, tastes; and the very presence of these implies obligation to make the best of them, so far as in him lies. This is the demand of both culture and religion, however their various methods may seem to differ. If culture is, as it has so often been defined, the study of perfection, then it gives itself over to the religious ideal. The narrowness of some forms of religion, with their one-sided development, is responsible for protests in the name of culture, which should have the result of bringing back religion into line with its whole duty.

There is a legitimate self-love, not merely the preservation of self, which we are told is a law of our nature, but true consideration for our own highest good. The Bible recognises the rights of selfhood, and even makes these rights the standard of duty to others,—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*.' This necessary self-love is taken for granted, as with a sharp stroke of logic the human instinct is turned

into a divine duty. Personality is a fact of life. Christ's teaching, even His teaching on sacrifice, is based on the sacredness of the individual life. The inalienable rights of personality got a new and commanding sanction from the whole trend of His teaching. In a sense He enunciated the doctrine of individuality with a force so new, that He may be said to have discovered to man the single soul. He placed the worth of a life against that of the whole world. Each soul was called out in splendid isolation to enter into relationship with God separately; each was endowed with sacred rights, and had a priceless value put on it. He liberated the energies, and enriched the capacities, bringing a reinforcement of the natural powers. The promise of the faith was ever life, and life more abundantly. It was a new doctrine of personality, which gave a slave the dignity of a free spiritual being, though in the eyes of the law he was a chattel. 'Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free'[1] was the watchword of the days to come, sounding in the ears of the early believers as a battle-cry, summoning them to assert their rights as living souls.

Of course, duty to self must be distinguished from selfishness, which is the abuse of this inherent self-regard. True self-love is not desire for the pleasure of self, but for the highest good of self. It is here, it may be said in passing, that there is room for sacrifice, which is left out in all selfish schemes of

[1] Gal. v. 1.

culture; for a man's highest good may be to give up something which his lower self desires and craves. To leave out of account the moral discipline of life, the supremacy of the conscience, the imperious claims of service, the calls to self-sacrifice that come to every man, is to mutilate life, as surely as the ascetic does in his rage for renunciation for its own sake. Still, even if it be found that complete renunciation is the ultimate demand of conscience as asceticism claims, if the test of life be not getting but giving up, it will still remain true that the more a man's personality is strengthened and enriched, the more precious is his contribution. True humility indeed implies self-respect: to give yourself up worthily you must feel yourself worthy to give. The rights of selfhood interpreted truly mean duties, and chiefly the duty of self-realisation, which sums up all the others. The ground of the duty is the recognition of how much can be done by sustained education, how much the varied forces and rich influences of the world can effect when allowed to play freely on a receptive nature; the recognition that, as Edmund Burke declared, 'It is the prerogative of man to be in a great degree a creature of his own making.'

According to the contents and spirit of our scheme of culture, so will be the strength of the moral claim it makes on us, and the depth of its moral basis as an adequate plan of life. Without moral sanctions, it could have no permanent elements for a human ideal. Self-preservation as

a mere instinct would work automatically, and we could not speak of it as a moral duty. Duty comes in when we enlarge and deepen the idea of self. If by it we mean more than just keeping existence going, if we mean the preserving of all that makes us men, the maintaining of all that it is in our nature to be, then moral obligation enters into it, and gives it a new and added value. Culture aims at a complete full-orbed existence, not cramped and one-sided through exclusive regard of a section of life. If then no other and higher moral obligation conflicts with it, we must admit the duty to seek the fulfilment of all the human possibilities which lie in us, the duty to attain and preserve utter health of nature and the complete integrity of our whole being, and to let growth reach its maturity in us. This is the demand of culture, and in this it surely joins hands with religion, which asserts that man should be *integer vitæ scelerisque purus*. We must accept the truth of the words, which Browning makes part of Bishop Blougram's Apology, whatever we may say to the rest of that Laodicean's philosophy,

> My business is not to remake myself,
> But make the absolute best of what God made.

The first step in such a comprehensive scheme is self-knowledge, and this too is the religious method. Culture is possible, and is a duty, because we are able to look in on ourselves, able to compare the

present with the past, to find out what our tastes, and temperament, and capacities, and weaknesses are. In consequence of this, we are able also to forecast to some extent what we can be, and can thus formulate an ideal towards which we can grow. Without a resolute attempt at self-knowledge, all efforts at culture will be largely misdirected. This self-knowledge means, not only the recognition of the general possibilities of human nature, but the more exact appreciation of personal qualities, and so will show how the best may be made of these. A false estimate of self may lead a man to attempt what is beyond his powers, vainly straining after distinction of work, when in a humbler sphere he might have achieved much. In every sphere of art and knowledge, as well as in practical business, how often we find men wasting their energies, and spending powers that in the right lines would produce great results for themselves and the world. Or what is worse, many fritter away their years without a thought beyond the mere externals of life, never conscious of the possibilities of their own nature, hardly aware that a whole world of beauty and joy and wisdom and truth lies open for them, if they will but enter it. Many doors remain shut that would unfold almost to the touch, if we but realised that we too had the right to go in, if we took a larger and braver conception of our birthright as men.

Take the simplest of the senses, for example—

sight. As a rule we just take it for granted, and leave it to artists as men of special capacity, or to men of science whose business it is, to use their eyes with trained judgment, and to educate their gift of sight. Observation, whether artistic or scientific, needs an intellectual effort, and the mass of men go through the world with their eyes shut, because they do not realise that they in their measure can cultivate the gift. We will not look long enough to notice form and colour, and as a result of neglect both nature and art are to a large extent sealed books to us. Indeed it may be said that of all the recognised instruments of culture the one which is most often overlooked is the faculty of observation. There are many more men read than think, and there are more still who think than observe; for it is much easier both to read, and to think after a fashion, than to observe. Observation in this sense is something different from the sense of sight. It implies attention, keenness of perception, and power of association to identify and classify. In the course of a country walk one man will see nothing, and remember nothing, but the obtrusive objects of the landscape, hedges, and fields, and farmhouses: another will have noted endless varieties of flower, and weed, and bird, and insect; or found full delight in some patch of colour, the graceful swaying of a branch, the tracery of a cloud; or will have had thoughts suggested, and remembered, that made his walk a mental refreshment. Just as in the region

of sound during the same walk, one man with uncultured ear hears nothing or only an indistinguishable blur, while another hears all sorts of tones and half-tones and harmonies and melodies, and even when sound itself seems dead, as on rare occasions happens, he hears what Keats calls

> A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
> Born of the very sigh that silence heaves.[1]

Observation is a trained faculty, a disciplined mind using the gate of the eye, and it is astonishingly rare in any maturity of power.

Even in the natural sciences, which are based on observation, men usually find it easier to theorise, and speculate, and make hypotheses, than to observe patiently and accurately. So rare is it that, when a man observes the simple facts around him and records lovingly and faithfully the actual things he sees day by day, he creates a masterpiece, as Gilbert White did in *The Natural History of Selborne*. In his preface he declares that he will be quite satisfied, if by his book he induces any readers to pay a more ready attention to the wonders of creation too frequently overlooked as common occurrences, or if he should have lent a helping hand towards the enlargement of the boundaries of historical and topographical knowledge, or if he should have thrown some light on ancient customs and manners; but he did more than all that, as he

[1] *Early Poems.*—'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill.'

has often given eyes to the blind, and ears to the deaf, the next time they took a country walk after knowing White of Selborne.

The kind of culture which is required for scientific work, is different from the usual meaning put into the phrase 'culture of the eye.' By it we mean a trained capacity to see beauty, and to intelligently appreciate it. It is an æsthetic thing rather than a scientific, but it is the same faculty nevertheless, trained in a different line. It also needs attention, keen perception, and power of association. For instance, before a painter can paint colour he must be able to see colour, able to recognise it where duller eyes miss it, see that a bare grey rock is not grey at all, but with shades of purple, it may be, and tones of blue and red. Of course this trained eye, even when joined to a trained hand, will not make an artist. For that, there is needed also the creative imagination, the soul to combine forms of beauty and body forth an image, for the production of which the eye and the hand are only the instruments. Still, this culture of the eye at least makes it possible for us to enjoy beauty whether of nature or art, and will unlock the sealed books.

This example we have taken of the faculty of sight is only an illustration of the training which culture would apply all along the line of man's powers, bringing them into self-consciousness, and so creating duty regarding them. Anything which will make men take an intelligent view of their

powers, and which will give them a larger and deeper conception of the opportunities of life, is to be welcomed as an ally of religion, the greatest obstacle to which is just that men will not think, will not consider, and only live lightly on the surface of things, never awed with mystery, or inspired with worshipful wonder. Nothing truly human lies outside the Christian sphere. If it puts the first emphasis on duty, on morality, on righteous living, that is because it must put first things first, as the necessary foundation for all else. Only on a firm moral basis can a harmoniously compacted life, such as culture aims at, be built; only on such a stable basis can there be the equipoise of human powers, which the æsthetic ideal seeks to reach. That ideal is therefore not essentially opposed to religion; rather it is bound to fail, if it is divorced from religion.

It is because the word culture has been degraded to mean a dilettante interest in art, and a taste for the 'precious' style in literature, that we find it difficult to give it this high place. But the word itself does not refer to the graces and accomplishments of good taste, nor even the acquisition of knowledge. It means the constant and careful tillage, needed to give the fit environment for something to grow, and that something is man himself, with his complete powers and faculties. In its full breadth of meaning, it seeks to raise all human capabilities to the highest potency by conscious

education, to enable a man to come to his true self. It aims at training all sides of a man's nature to make him as perfect, as finished a human being as possible. If so, then religion claims it as an instrument for its great work.

It is true that the word in common speech is usually confined to the intellectual sphere, and perhaps it should be limited to this, to avoid the confusion of thought due to the double meaning; but even in this limited sense of seeking to train the mind by knowledge and to increase susceptibility to beauty, its value is great; and to this value we will now try briefly to do justice.

First of all, the æsthetic ideal, in even its narrow sense, has been useful as a necessary protest against any form of asceticism, which wilfully limits or mutilates human life. By bringing into prominence a side of ethics often overlooked, and by refusing to allow the legitimate claims of man's nature to be ruthlessly set aside, it has proved a valuable corrective of error in morals, even when it disclaims to have anything to do with morality. Sacrifice or self-denial must always have a place in a true life, but it is never to be sought for its own sake, as if there were any merit in the mere form of denial. This has ever been a besetting temptation of religion, to put a magical value on ascetic practices, and to conclude that the simple secret of attaining spiritual heights was to renounce the natural, and to trample

on one side of human nature. This rival ideal will be more fully treated hereafter, but culture does useful work in pointing with unwavering insistence to spheres of activity that demand scope, and to instincts whose very existence is a prophecy of fulfilment. Nature has stamped her work with the indelible mark of beauty, and it is disease, not health, when a man refuses to respond to it, and smothers his heart lest it leap up, with Wordsworth, when he beholds a rainbow in the sky. This response to nature is the birth of art, which is at its highest pure praise, the expression of man's joy in the beauty of creation. There is a Mysticism (the sworn foe of culture) which dallies with the ascetic creed, and which degrades the material in the supposed interests of the spiritual. The mystic Tauler, we are told, used to draw his cap over his eyes when in the country, that the violets might not withdraw him from his inward communion. That is the weakness of his school, a mistake with him, an affectation in the weaker men who followed the great mystics. A higher and healthier mysticism would be that, which would see God in the violets, and have delighted in them, and have made them an occasion for adoration and praise. The absorbed abstracted look, under the drawn cap to avoid the violets, may be but the evidence of a subtler unfaith, the unfaith which would empty the world of God.

The æsthetic ideal is also useful to-day as entering a *caveat* to all socialistic schemes, which would

neglect to provide full scope for the individual. Culture, even as a pseudo-gospel, has value as a protest against all materialistic ideals, socialist or otherwise, which seem to think that man can live by bread alone. Whatever its shortcomings, it believes with all its soul that life is more than meat. It points to spheres as essential to the true well-being of man as the state of outward prosperity, to which the grumbling Israelites looked back with regret,—'then had we plenty of victuals, and were well.'[1] It lays emphasis on the higher reaches of man's life, and judges a civilisation by larger tests than ordinary commercial ones. It looks to the *quality* of a nation's life, as well as to the evidences that most appeal to the eye, and if it perhaps exaggerates the worth of literature, and music, and art, it helps to redress the balance, which weighs heavily on the other side. Its teaching is a variant of the great word, that the life of a man consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, a lesson which men have at all periods needed, but which has seldom been so necessary as in our day, when the first of all problems is, how to protect the higher life of man against secularity. Our age is so severely and intensely practical that many have little patience with anything which is not suffused with the same spirit.

This has been due partly to the rapid advance of natural science, which has dazzled us by the wonder-

[1] Jer. xliv. 17.

ful discoveries, which enable us to use material forces. The keenest and finest brains have been directed to scientific investigations, and science takes the place in the estimation of men which formerly philosophy held. Then, along with the advance of science, and as a consequence of it, there has been as great an advance of industry in the application of the forces of nature, till machinery is sometimes more important in modern conditions of manufacture than the labour which directs it. A material invention for saving labour is of much more moment, than any amount of abstract thought. Everything has its market value—even a quality of brain can be classified, according to the wages it can demand. Naturally enough, in the opinion of the mass, the active energetic life takes precedence over the contemplative life, and the temptation is a very real one to look upon everything, which cannot be rated in the money market, as mere idleness. In some business circles, for a boy to wish to be an artist is to blast his character with a lasting disgrace, and a father would not dream of encouraging his son to become a minister, or enter into a life of study, and would be alarmed and shocked to know that he wrote poetry, though he might forgive him if he could write popular novels and make plenty of money by it. This false and vulgar standard of judging life plays endless mischief; it even ruins our industry, and is responsible for the ugliness and poor quality of so much production. The artistic

spirit is killed in the sordid atmosphere, which appraises everything by its price. There are many virtues in the eager, practical, utilitarian spirit of our age, and it carries much hope in its bosom for an ultimate social condition juster than any hitherto reached, but this need not blind us to the dangers and faults of our type of life. However we are taught the lesson, it is well to learn that the world will not be saved by machinery and electrical appliances, that these may be developed to an undreamt-of degree and yet leave man essentially where he is, lower indeed in the scale of life instead of higher. The end of civilisation is not money but men, and there is a higher standard by which to judge things than the standard of utility, since in Victor Hugo's pregnant phrase the beautiful is as useful as the useful.

In a slightly different sphere also, the æsthetic ideal even in its narrowest sense is a protest against scientific narrowness. It points to a world of thought and beauty beyond facts of observation, and will not be hampered by the limits of scientific evidence, which science sometimes dogmatically lays down. Art and science may think they have had more than once a just cause of quarrel with religion, but often they have a fiercer quarrel with each other. Science may narrow the boundaries of life unduly, by insisting on everything being submitted to the one invariable test. Goethe saw this, when he said that the constant use of the microscope interferes

with the normal use of the eye, by which he suggests an explanation of the failure of so many scientists as philosophers. It is easy to become absorbed in details and forget unity, to be so concerned with analysis that there is no room for the idea of synthesis. In addition to the parts there is the whole, and the whole is more than a summation of the parts. Culture demands room for the intuitional as well as the rational faculty, room for imagination and poetry, and is a witness to the unseen and eternal; for it affirms a soul of beauty and truth behind and within all material appearance.

It follows from this that certain advantages accrue to the individual, who opens his mind to the æsthetic ideal; though it is only possible to touch lightly on the more palpable of these advantages. It saves him from vulgar standards; for in the personal life of men culture dares to criticise success. It shows its disciples that there are larger things in the world than getting on, and more worthy things to worship than the great goddess of prosperity. Its eyes are open to the defects of the quality, which the world acclaims and loads with honour and wealth. In the man of culture, as in the saint on another level of things, we find an abstraction from common-place ways, a point of view which somehow puts things in a different perspective than the usual one. They look at events without being absorbed in the mere mass. They come to the ordinary affairs of life as

from a high platform of thought, from a serener air, and put them in their right place of precedence, and by their very manner we are able to see the smallness of the small and the greatness of the great. To them truth even on the scaffold is still truth, and wrong even on the throne is still wrong, however many voices shout the contrary. They classify according to a finer scale of judgment, and it is good to be reminded of the true proportion of things. Such men of ripe nature and poised mind may be practically wrong, so far as their verdict on an outward event seems to go, but they are æsthetically right, and at least we are forced to acknowledge the loftiness of their standard. We need some of this calm self-command, which will keep us from being rushed off our feet by the brute force of outside opinion or feeling or passion.

A cognate benefit is that culture saves from provincialism and narrowness of interest, to which we are so prone. It suggests catholic ideas, and gives to every subject a touch of the universal, which will at least often preserve us from dogmatism. The attitude of mental hospitality, which opens the door to large thoughts and receives them as welcome guests, tends to evict the prejudices and narrowness, which would otherwise dwell securely in the mind. Life needs new vistas to be ever opening up, to save it from atrophy of its best powers. To create intellectual alertness and enlarge the radius of interest is no small boon, as we see if we think of

the common conversation among people even in educated circles, how limited it is, working over a few threadbare topics with hardly an idea in them, concerned chiefly with personalities. When the weather and a few kindred subjects are exhausted with some people, the possibilities are exhausted, till one sometimes feels that if expression were given to a great vital thought in ordinary society, it would be like the bursting of a bomb-shell in their midst. In a country place we know how refreshing it is, and how rare, to talk to a man whose horizon is not bounded by his village, and whose conversation is larger than the doings and sayings of the few families who make up what is called society there; and the same provincialism is to be found in cities, in kind if not in degree. Culture, by training powers of thought and observation, at least gives a man a wider outlook.

Thus, it broadens a man's judgments, as well as his interests. He gradually gains capacity to see round a subject, which keeps him from onesidedness, before coming to a final judgment. The world would have been saved from many a silly theory, many a crude system, many a delirium of passion, if more men were able through training to come to an informed, and therefore a calm, decision. This indeed is the chief value of the best education, not the amount of information in itself which has been gathered in the course of the education. The mere mass of knowledge in science, or mathematics, or

classical learning, retained in after-life from an ordinary university course, is in itself in most cases not much. The worth of it lies in the intellectual outlook it has given, the habits of thought and attention it has formed, the standards of comparison and judgment it has implanted in the mind.

Further, a steadfast pursuit of some such ideal is the truest recreation. Our work often narrows us. In many cases under present industrial conditions this cannot be helped, as the best commercial results are produced by specialism, not only in manual labour, but in every branch of activity. We ought therefore to try and adjust the balance somewhat, by entering into the wider world of the best human thought. It is the finest recreation; for it restores the mind to healthy conditions and enlarges the vision. The result will be even beneficial to the particular work, since whatever enriches and reinforces the complete nature will affect each part. Such is the aim of all true recreation, to so recuperate the life that it will restore vigour everywhere. It is the quality of life to spread its power to the utmost limits of its confines, as health tingles to the very finger-tips. For the sake then of the very capacity to produce, on which the modern world lays so much stress, it is well to have such an unfailing source of refreshment and recreation as the ideal of culture offers.

Much of the moral evil, which is associated with methods of recreation, is due to the miseries of a

vacant life, that has no other outlet to hand when the daily tasks are done. Many of the sins of youth are fostered by emptiness of mind, by sheer lack of intellectual interests. They can only be driven out and kept out, by claiming the whole territory of the mind for higher things. A young man cannot expect to be saved from the crowding seductions of the streets, which pluck him by the elbow at every turn, if he has no interests that fill his thoughts, and is living an aimless mental life. 'Mark Rutherford,' in a chapter[1] wonderful for its delicate psychological study, tells how he overcame the temptation, which wine had gradually assumed over him. He had been led into it by physical weakness and the more stubborn weakness of hypochondria, and when he felt his misery insupportable he turned to the bottle. When he wakened up to the fact that the craving for it was getting the better of him, he resolved never to touch it except at night, but the consequence of this was that he looked forward to the night with such eagerness, that the day seemed to exist only for the sake of the evening. The thought of the degradation this implied, and especially the knowledge that his intellectual interests were suffering from his temptation, spurred him to the determination that he would not allow his life to become thus debased. He played his love of reading and thinking over against the tempter, and drove him out; and so conquered not by brute

[1] *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, chap. iii.

strength but by strategy. The most powerful inducement to abstinence in his case was the interference of wine with what he really loved best, and the transference of desire from what was most desirable to what was sensual and base. What enabled him to conquer was, not so much heroism as a susceptibility to nobler joys. So potent a motive in his particular experience was this, that he thinks the difficulty which must be encountered in the same task by a man, who is not susceptible to these intellectual pleasures, must be enormous and almost insuperable. It is not too high a claim, therefore, to make for culture that it sometimes offers a purifying power, by which a man rises above meaner pleasures through the wide expansion of life, and that it gives the promise of a rich and full nature, which can give the autumnal felicity of men of letters, to which Gibbon[1] looked forward for the evening of his days.

Again, whatever be its danger of a subtler egotism which we shall notice in next chapter, culture at its best corrects the ordinary vanity of ignorance, and it should not be forgotten that, 'the pride of science is humble compared with the pride of ignorance.' The man of one idea, of one subject, unless it be the subject which includes all and attempts to take within its scope all life, loses the power of comparison, and in his zeal for his fragment of truth obscures the proportions of truth, and even runs the

[1] *Memoirs*, last page.

risk of becoming inflated with personal vanity. If he had the true balance he could not be vain, and the balance can only come from a larger variety of interest and a wider range of thought. Culture would show him how large the universe is and would save him from himself. It is something to know that there were kings before Agamemnon, and that everything that exists can only be explained with reference to what has gone before. A surface study of history may indeed tend to the lowering of conviction and the impoverishing of moral energy, by revealing the slow growth of opinions and habits and all human institutions; but it should at least impress some lesson of humility. Intellectual culture, if conducted on a broad enough scheme, should be an antidote to narrow conceit. True knowledge of the world, of men, of books, of history, of thought, can hardly consist with an inflated opinion of one's own importance. Egotism is an unfailing sign of insufficient culture; for true culture makes a man bigger than his habitat. It is ignorance, not knowledge, which makes rash judgments, and which settles things by prejudice.

We have spoken of culture, rightly understood, as the servant of religion, and if it even tends to foster the virtues mentioned above it must be so; but in addition it should be the servant of religious people in other ways, if only by widening the outlook. Many of the mistakes of religion are due to the lack of it, due to the failure to claim every

region of man's life for religion. Culture, for one thing, would preserve from zeal without knowledge. It is often thought that zeal is a sufficient excuse for almost anything; but there is hardly a cruelty, or uncharitableness, or loveless intolerance, or arrogance, which could not be justified on the same score. Largeness of view, breadth of interest, would save from the petty narrowness which disfigures so many religious characters. Culture also would keep a man from going to Genesis for his science, or to the modern novel for his theology. It should make us appreciate even opponents, by giving us insight into their standpoint and sympathy with their very mistakes. A broad culture, which enters with insight into all human life, and into the great causes that have moved men, should result in an enlargement of sympathy; though this is often sadly lacking in some, from whom we expect sufficient knowledge to give the large vision. Matthew Arnold asks us to imagine Shakespeare or Virgil on board the *Mayflower*, and suggests what strange unsympathetic fellow-travellers they would make with the Pilgrim Fathers. He has made surely a singularly inappropriate choice of examples. Dante at least thought that Virgil's spirit was so akin to his, that he made him the guide through Purgatory, and classed him as near a Christian as any pre-Christian man could be. It may be that the Puritan fathers, who sailed on the *Mayflower*, might not completely appreciate Shakespeare, though it must be remembered that

the Puritan objection to the drama was not necessarily due to want of appreciation of dramatic literature, but due to the recognition of the evil conditions that have too often been associated with the theatre. But in any case, even though the Puritan fathers might not have appreciated Shakespeare, there is no doubt that Shakespeare would have appreciated them. As a fact there are many evidences to a diligent and keen reader of his works that he did appreciate the truths, which after all, in spite of any possible extravagances, are at the bottom of the Puritan faith. It is not a very promising sign for the existence of true culture, if a man cannot enter with some sympathy into the heroic aspiration, which has embalmed the *Mayflower* in history. As a question of mere sensibility to human achievements, there are some things, which have no seeming art about them, which should inspire as much admiration as the finest picture ever painted.

It has to be recognised that even as a self-sufficient ideal claiming to represent man's chief end, culture is a much higher ideal than many which have appealed to men, such as the philosophy, both speculative and practical, which makes happiness the end. Culture looks to *becoming*, not to having, or enjoying merely. It sees that life only truly maintains itself in any sphere through growth; and it would use growth to reach as full a maturity

and ripeness of character as possible. It makes deliberate choice of the materials for growth, in order to attain complete self-development. It would appropriate its share of the common wealth of the world, to enrich the personality, and to educate all the faculties. So far as it goes, this is a noble ideal, and should be looked on not merely as a right which may be claimed for self, but as a duty which should be imposed on self. To be sensitive to all the influences of the beauty of the world, and susceptible to all life's sweetest music, and responsive to all the enriching and enlarging thoughts of the race, must always be marks of the highest minds. There may be good reasons, either personal to oneself or due to special social conditions, why it may be necessary to pass a self-denying ordinance regarding some legitimate item of the programme of culture. It may be necessary for some to live as though art, or literature, or music did not exist; and there will always be occasions, when duty will point to some form of renunciation, when the culture of soul will take precedence of every other thing, or when the imperious call to service will make all else become as dross in value.

But such occasions do not invalidate the claim of culture, that these fruits of the human spirit are good, and that Beauty and Truth are rightful objects for men to put before themselves. Otherwise, art and science could only exist on sufferance in a world, which they are engaged in interpreting

to men, the one in terms of beauty, the other in terms of truth. Science may be misused as an instrument of secularity, and art may be degraded into a 'procuress to the lords of hell,' but it seems to be of the very nature of the best gifts that they easily lend themselves to abuse, as the history of all human institutions, and even the history of religion itself, show—*corruptio optimi pessima.*

Nothing can permanently take from man the conviction that he was meant to possess these fields which culture offers, to master them for his own best life and for the world's true joy. To ban the love of beauty, to stifle inquiry into truth, to be blind to the fascination of art and letters, is in the ultimate issue infidelity, though it seem sometimes to be in the interest of faith. Faith can not be made perfect, till she accepts the divine self-revelation through beauty, and through law, as well as through love. Though it may be that now we see many points of conflict, yet it must remain the deepest faith that, when the full vision is reached, nothing that is true in science, or beautiful in art, will need to be sacrificed in the complete round of religion. Even now, when faith opens the ears, how often it is that the very prophets of nature can speak to us a lasting inspiration, and the masters of culture can

> Instruct us how the mind of man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth.

CHAPTER III

DEFECTS OF THE ÆSTHETIC IDEAL

In spite of the great truth of the æsthetic ideal, and the distinct value it has both as a theory of life and as a practical scheme for enriching the whole nature of man, when taken by itself it has always failed in the long run, not only in making life nobler and sweeter, but has failed even in keeping itself true to its own best self. The causes of its failure are not far to seek, when we realise some of the besetting temptations which ever attend it. Culture, when it takes the highest footing as a self-sufficient ideal claiming to cover all the ground, starts from the position that all that is needed to reach the perfect man is the consistent and persistent cultivation of all the powers and tendencies already existing in human nature; it seeks to give full play to all sides of life, and hopes to arrive at a harmonious balance of all the innate capacities. We can see how easily this can degenerate into base compliance with personal leanings, and how even it can be made an excuse for all forms of selfishness, sometimes indeed going

so low as to offer a justification for the most heart-withering sensualism. If the one aim of life is that a man should unfold himself, he can argue that he is only following his nature, by tasting every sort of experience, and giving full play to every impulse. From such a creed he can cozen himself with the thought that he is learning life and fulfilling himself, by indulging every instinct which he finds within him. We often find a bluntness of moral sense and a deep-seated selfishness of life, combined with a high degree of intellectual training. This of course could not be laid to the charge of culture, except in so far as it claims to be a sufficient guide to life, and yet does not adequately safeguard life from the moral dangers that menace it. We are beset with the temptation to give way at the point of least resistance, and if we have no moral sanctions, no imperial note of conscience, other than is contained in a scheme of natural culture, it is difficult to get firm ground in maintaining an ethical standard, that will not be pliable in the presence of keen personal tastes, not to say even in the presence of any overmastering temptation. When a man begins with the theory that every impulse only needs its due cultivation to make it contribute to a fulness of life, he is easily deceived into giving way to what he likes best, and defending it as part of his plan to develop himself along the line of his nature.

It would be untrue to suggest that moral laxity

is a feature of character to be discovered in the lives of the men who have rigorously pursued a large scheme of culture—rather we have admitted that such a scheme should save the life from grosser pleasures and meaner sins—at the same time, if accepted generally without modifications as a theory of life, it offers very evident opportunities for great abuses. It may of course be asserted that it is only when the theory is falsely viewed and wrongly used that it seems to open the door to these darker excesses. It may be asserted that a complete scheme of culture would provide moral and spiritual training, and would make a man susceptible to all noble influences, and would in any moral crisis call for adherence to the good, even though it promise to bring only unhappiness; but this after all is imported into the theory and is an arbitrary standard, and does not spring naturally out of the original position. From the premises stated, we are not justified in condemning another, because he chooses for himself a lower type of experience and a grosser form of pleasure than we perhaps would approve for ourselves. There will always be a moral danger attached to culture as a system, when it is not regulated and restrained by deeper sanctions. We easily enough fall into its plan of seeking experiences and an ampler sphere of thought and emotion, but for safety this natural craving needs to be under the firm rule not only of enlightened reason but also of self-controlled will.

So real is this danger that Walter Pater, who is a foremost apostle of the new Hellenism, left out of the second edition of his *Renaissance* the chapter in which he summed up the creed of culture, because he conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall—and with some reason, as the chapter, restored with some changes in subsequent editions, still testifies. It states very frankly his philosophy, which is worked out in his brilliant study of the sensations and ideas of *Marius the Epicurean.* It is a restatement in artistic form and beautiful language of the old 'sensational' philosophy. To him our physical life is a perpetual motion of impressions with some exquisite intervals, and the inward world of mind consists of a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought, so that life is like a flame eagerly being devoured, or like the race of a swift stream on which a tremulous wisp forms and reforms itself as it breaks into consciousness. All our knowledge is not of solid objects as common speech puts it, but of impressions unstable, flickering, which burn and are extinguished at the precise moment we know them. These impressions are in constant flight, sensations that hardly exist before they cease to be. The service of speculative culture towards the human spirit in such a plight is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. The true purpose of life is not to gain the fruits of experience to be stored up in character, but experience itself is

the only and sufficient end, to attain to some attractive mood of passion, or insight, or intellectual excitement. In the quick pulsation of this evanescent life, the great aim should be to pass most swiftly from point to point, and if possible contrive to 'be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy. To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.' The stereotyped, the fixed, the formation of habits, settled theories of knowledge, or systems of morality, all are signs of failure. There is a great deal to be taken out of life, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, and we have a tragically short time to do it in. 'While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. . . What we have to do is to be ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions. . . . The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.'[1]

[1] Pater, *Renaissance*, last chap.

In plain English it amounts to the well-worn philosophy of a short life and a merry one, more high-toned than the common quality, because it puts the emphasis on the higher pleasures of the mind, and believes that the truest and best things to seek are wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, love of art for its own sake. But if there be no other foundation for life but this, if the only ideal is how to make the most possible of the interval before the flame burns itself out, does it follow that it is so very much wiser to spend the time in art and song, than to spend it as some do in listlessness, and others in high passion? What is to be said to the man who adopts the creed, but prefers the more vulgar way of getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time, if he thinks the pursuit of art too attenuated a point of sensation, and too exquisite for his coarser grain of nature? There is nothing to be said to him, except that it might have been wiser to have tried for the higher sort of pulsation. It has been a common but a puerile thought of modern Hellenism that we might reach the fruits of early Greek culture by emulating the idle curiosity of the Athenians of St. Paul's day,[1] who spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing; but it is forgotten that there was no culture in Athens at that time; art and literature, and thought, and political life were at their lowest, swallowed up in a great degradation. The

[1] Acts xvii. 21.

real truth is that on Pater's basal philosophy there is no adequate foundation even for a permanent culture, to say nothing of a foundation for life.

It may be said at this point that alongside of such a creed of despair the religious man has a far grander conception of even culture, not limited to a hurried grasp at all sorts of experience, in case he might miss some interesting one that might set his spirit free for a moment. To him it is not experience that is the end (that can only result in Epicureanism), but the *fruit* of experience in a wise mind, a ripened character, a sanctified spirit. So he is not exclusively concerned about gathering all his energies into one desperate effort to see and touch, and he is even willing to sacrifice some part of his possible experiences in consideration of a higher interest. Living in the power of an endless life, he accepts the world as a school of discipline, in which he is to become something, as well as enjoy something. The greatest agent for enlargement of life is true religion, which Pater leaves out of account. It includes culture, and transcends it; for it assures a man that these experiences, which enter into character, and which make him the man he becomes, do not break like bubbles on a stream. It lifts a man among the infinities and immensities, bringing reverence, and education of heart, and the wide vision.

From Pater's position we can see why he should deprecate the making of theories about the things we see and touch, holding, as he does, that all our

time should be given to actually entering into the experiences open to us; though the position is not quite logical, as this conclusion is itself built on a theory, namely, that all our knowledge is confined to impressions. But this attitude of despair regarding the possibilities of man's mind would result in the death of even intellectual culture, which could only look for nimbleness of mind in laying hold of the prominent features of a subject, but without capacity of long-sustained thought. Even in intellectual circles it is common to find men who think keenly of each thing as it comes, but who never seem to feel the need of co-ordinating their thinking and finding a unity. They look at things closely and critically, but in a disconnected way. No doubt they are saved from much of the pain of thought, as they are saved from the malady of the ideal, but it is at the expense of the highest power in man. Man can only resign this necessity, by at the same time resigning himself to conscious smallness. We need not underline also the distinct moral danger, apart altogether from the possibility of gross abuse. The attempt to put into life as much as possible, to value it by the number of pulsations of sensation, to keep in touch with all sorts of varied interests, carries with it the temptation to seek this in excitements, in distractions, and to grow only on the surface without the steady deep virtues. This is a temptation to which all forms of culture taken by itself are liable, giving a lack of moral perspective, if not of moral appreciation itself.

An illustration of the way in which the things of conscience are made light of, in comparison with some supposed more attractive development, is found in Pater's treatment of Winckelmann in his studies on the Renaissance. Winckelmann was chosen by him as the most typical modern, who showed as in an afterglow the spirit of the Renaissance by his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination, by his Hellenism, his life-long struggle to attain to the Greek spirit. When the Saxon Court turned Roman Catholic, the way to favour at Court was through the Roman ecclesiastics; and Winckelmann, in the hope of a place in the Pope's library, and thus getting an opportunity of visiting Rome on which he had set his heart, became a Roman Catholic against his belief. Pater thinks he may be absolved at the bar of the highest criticism for the deceit, and defends the insincerity of his religious profession as 'only one incident of a culture in which the moral instinct, like the religious or political, was merged in the artistic.'[1] He suggests that Winckelmann was making a renunciation of moral candour for the sake of the higher life, which to him meant the artistic interest, and that thus in reality he was true to himself. There is no word to designate this defence but the ugly word 'cant,' of which there are various kinds as well as the distinctively religious type. To speak of the renunciation of conscience for the sake of the

[1] *Renaissance*, p. 198.

higher life, to be advanced by selling himself in exchange for an opportunity of examining the art treasures of Rome, is to play with words. Far truer is Pater's earlier judgment, with which he might have left the incident, that to a transparent, simple nature like Winckelmann's the loss of absolute sincerity must have been a real loss. We admit and reverence the high artistic aim which made Winckelmann say, 'It will be my highest reward if posterity acknowledges that I have written worthily,' but the mistake which many culturists make is to suppose that the life of man can be cut up into sections, making the intellectual stand by itself apart from the moral; whereas each part affects the whole, and the whole affects each part. The theoretic isolation from the moral side of life is impossible in practice. Indifferentism, probed to the heart, invariably means the adherence to a lower creed, and the choice of a lower plane of thought and life. There never was a more inept and foolish remark than the common one, that it does not matter what a man believes. A man's faith is the vital principle which moves his life, and infallibly shows the lines on which it is run. The liberality of mind and width of tolerance, which are due to moral indifference, mean facile acceptance of any creed, and result practically in acquiescence in the present state of the public conscience.

Judged from the standpoint of the higher ethics any theory, which makes self-culture the absolute

ideal, cannot be acquitted also of selfishness, which comes from the lack of moral perspective. To take another concrete illustration from the life of a great man of culture, the charge of selfishness, which has sometimes been made against Goethe, is perhaps hardly a fair one in the usual acceptance of the word; for he was generous by nature, was habitually kind in a somewhat cold way, was genial in all his relations, though he never forgot himself, and indeed systematically cultivated the sympathetic feelings as part of his scheme, because he saw from his large keen view of life that these also were essential to the complete culture he aimed at; but he allowed no thought of others to interfere with his serene scheme of self-culture, and warded off as much as possible every uncomfortable contact. He suffered from the temptation to look upon everything in human life as artistic material, or as means towards self-realisation. He expresses his great purpose in a letter to Lavater, 'The desire to raise the pyramid of my existence, the base of which is laid already, as high as possible in the air absorbs every other desire, and scarcely ever quits me.'[1] It was a noble aim, demanding self-restraint and many moral qualities, but it led him to accommodate himself not only to the limitations of life, but also to many things which could not be justified. He never quite lost self-consciousness, so flagrantly evident in Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe; and in all

[1] Lewes, *Life of Goethe*, vol. ii. ch. i.

his life he never knew the passion of self-forgetful devotion. He avoided committing himself to anything or to anybody outside of himself, or to anything that he thought would hinder his own development. Some of this caution was necessary to one who had determined never to spend time over what, he very soon discovered by his quick insight, was foreign to his own nature. In the art of life, as in all arts, there must be selection of material, and no man can safely wear his heart on his sleeve. But it may well be asserted that Goethe would have been a deeper and larger man, and would even have aided his great design of total self-development, if he had not shrunk from taking on him more manfully the burden of other lives. He might have retained his wonderful intellectual truthfulness, his magnificent self-mastery, his unswerving fidelity to his great purpose, and all the essential qualities of his broad culture, even if he had submitted himself to the common limitation of the ordinary relationships. It would have given him a keener insight, and a larger outlook, and a fuller all-round development. In any case his attitude led him into many great errors, some of which, like his treatment of Frederika and of women generally, have laid him open to the charge of callous selfishness, and even of moral poltroonery.

Something of the same moral lack is reflected in his work. If we leave out of account his early and noble drama *Götz von Berlichingen*, he has not created

a single man with grandeur of moral character and unselfish devotion. There is some truth in Mazzini's criticism of Goethe, standing aloof from the great causes that throbbed through the world of his day, when questions of life and death for millions were agitated round him, when Germany re-echoed to the war-songs of Körner, when Fichte and the best spirits took their share of the burden; the criticism that Goethe looked on unmoved and drew aside from the current, that he saw the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon, the reaction of down-trodden nationalities, and remained ever a cold spectator. To the ardent Italian prophet of a new age his attitude seemed inhuman, and his conclusion is 'he had neither learned to esteem men, to better them, nor even to suffer with them.'[1] The criticism is one-sided, and there is something to be said for the artist's impassive calm; but it is only a further illustration of our present point of the danger to which an exclusive scheme of self-culture leads.

The theory, as claiming to be a sufficient guide to life, fails by taking a shallow conception of life and of the needs of life, however wide be its programme of general culture. It shuts its eyes to the darker side, to sin and the moral twist in man. It does not take into account all the facts, and so fails to provide an adequate motive. It has no heroic remedy for the desperate disease; and many a time, in view of that disease, the schemes of culture strike us as

[1] Mazzini, *Essay on Byron and Goethe*.

ludicrous as the application of rose-water to stay the plague. As we look on history and life, we see the pathetic mixture of good and evil, we see how true it is of men that 'the angel has them by the hand, the serpent by the heart'; and culture has nothing to say to the serpent, except to suggest a process of gentle eviction. It neglects moral discipline, which alone can co-ordinate all the powers of a man's nature and give a centre of unity. It does not present the motive of an overmastering passion such as religion gives, which sees the need for sacrifice, and which makes sacrifice easy. It follows that culture is blind to the place of suffering in the perfection of man, and to the necessity of sacrifice in the making of a noble life. If it be replied that culture does not claim such a large sphere, and contents itself with presenting an intellectual and artistic ideal, without attempting to save the whole man or to save society, the answer is that in that case its failure is even more disastrous. The more narrow it is in its aims, the more onesided its conception of life becomes. By spending all its energies on one side of human nature, it becomes the more untrue to its own ideal, which is proportional development, complete symmetry of life.

We have already seen that one of the difficulties of our subject is that culture changes its ground so often, and appears at one time as a theory of life containing the whole duty of man, and at another

time professes to limit itself to the cultivation of one section of the field of life. But even on its chosen ground as pre-eminently an intellectual scheme culture is liable to stumble. First of all, it naturally enough overestimates the particular corner which it has claimed for itself. If we give ourselves up exclusively to intellectual pursuits, we come to lay more stress than is warranted on the paramount claims of mind. Ruskin, describing his change from his work on art to his work on social reform and as a moral and religious teacher, attributed the change to his disillusionment about the value of the long years he gave to make the public understand the worth and beauty of Turner's painting. He began, he tells us,[1] by believing that men just needed to know, just needed to have the beauty pointed out to them to see and appreciate; but he found out from the public apathy that it was not so, and further began to realise how little effect would be produced, even if the people generally did learn to value his favourite artist at his right worth. This is the constant mistake of the gospel of culture. When Matthew Arnold defines culture as 'a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best that has been thought and said in the world,' he assumes that we might reach total perfection if we only got to *know*. Life is bigger and more complex than

[1] Lecture on 'The Mystery of Life and the Arts,' included in Complete Edition of *Sesame and Lilies:*

that would make out. So much even of our education is useless and barren, because it looks no further afield than the training of the mind. Mere cultivated intelligence is no safe guide, as could be illustrated from the biographies of the most eminent apostles and the most diligent disciples of culture. In finding our way about amid the mysteries of the world and the practical problems of life, merely through getting to know what others have thought and said, though it be the choicest thought and the noblest speech, there is no guarantee that our acquired information will avail much for our particular difficulties. And even the light that is in us may be darkness.

The æsthetic ideal itself in some of its branches admits that there are other organs of knowledge than intellect; for it makes much of artistic taste, and of qualities that are rather intuition than reason. If we could lay bare all the mental processes, by which we come to a decision or express a preference, we would be surprised how little reason entered into them. The way in which beauty affects us is not settled by critical principles, and is not reached by a knowledge of canons of taste however correct. Indeed, except in pure demonstration we are influenced by far more delicate inherent qualities than reason—by faith, by taste, by personal sympathy. Any fairly extensive culture will itself teach us the necessity of guarding against the particular mental bias encouraged by our special studies; as for

example the scientific mind is inclined to rule out of court everything which is not scientific evidence, the philosophic mind is tempted to deal only with abstractions, with vague principles and tendencies.

The limitations of intellect are most distinctly seen in connection with our relations to people. Truth about the character of other men is impossible without sympathy. This is why so much of our literature is only superficial cleverness, a mere gift of describing from the outside with no real understanding. A man may set out to write a realistic sketch of the poor and the quarters they live in, a sketch which may be quite true so far as it goes. He may give a tale of mean streets, the sordid trappings of the life he has gone to observe, which will be called strong writing and a transcript from life, if he only writes in what is called a realistic way. With all its appearance of truth it may be essentially false, simply because the author has never entered into the heart of the people he tries to describe. His book may run to mammoth editions, and may be praised as a study of a great problem, and the whole result be a colossal waste of clean paper and printer's ink. We will get more true knowledge of the problem from the humble city missionary or the sister of mercy, whose hearts are full of pity and love, and who see past the trappings and the mean streets to the pathos and the tragedy, the human sorrow and joy, the hopes and despairs, the struggles with sin and the triumphs of grace. In our ordinary

intercourse with men how often we blunder about character, or mistake motives, or misunderstand words and acts, because we are not in tune with one another, have never plumbed the depths of their mind, and never been ushered into their holy place. It is only love which can give this insight, and can let us see a little into the poetry as well as the penury of life, the glory as well as the burden of the earth. 'Truly they who know,' says Mæterlinck,[1] 'still know nothing, if the strength of love be not theirs; for the true sage is not he who sees, but he who, seeing the farthest, has the deepest love for mankind. He who sees without loving is only straining his eyes in the darkness.'

This leads us to say that there is here the explanation why intellectual culture so often undervalues religion, because it fails to take note of the necessary instruments of entering into spiritual truth. It is well to realise the essential limitation of intellect and of the whole sphere of knowledge. Reason demands clearness of ideas, but life is not ruled and guided by clear ideas. No truth is cut off in the clear sharp outlines which we for convenience sake attribute to it; even in the exact sciences, as we call them, which deal with facts, we touch forces we cannot understand. And in the sphere of action and motives the greatest of our ideas and principles of action are not clear, and cannot be completely stated in words at all. It is good to clarify our

[1] *Wisdom and Destiny.*

thoughts, but many of the principles of our moral life are necessarily obscure in their origin and vague in their nature, and this is just because they are so big. Conscience, duty, generosity, all the things that compose the spiritual riches of man, have the vagueness of greatness about them.

Even when the intellectual effort is genuine and consistently carried out, we often see in the result a strange and almost pathetic narrowness of life. Mark Pattison says in his *Memoirs*, 'I have really no history but a mental history. . . . All my energy was directed upon one end, to form my own mind, to sound things thoroughly, to free myself from the bondage of unreason and the traditional prejudices which, when I began first to think, constituted the whole of my intellectual fabric.'[1] That he was successful in his aim every one who knows his work will admit. His *Memoirs* is a record of long and strenuous mental development. He gained his highest ambition, and became the head of an Oxford College, and was the possessor of unrivalled academic leisure which he used consistently for his great end of ever enlarging and expanding his mental horizon; and yet in reading his frank book of memoirs we are touched by a strange sense of the narrowness of his life, by a lack of the large human interests. His judgments on other men are often so peculiarly intellectual that we feel instinctively that we cannot trust them. The same sense of

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 1.

ultimate failure comes upon us as we read the lives of men of similar type.

In some even we find their culture ending in empty pride of intellect, forgetting that such capacity as they have is not of merit after all, but theirs 'through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes.' It is true that this pride is due to an incomplete culture, which has not been carried far enough till self-consciousness has reached the point of self-forgetfulness. All education must *begin* in self-consciousness, in acquiring mastery over the instruments. A man must first of all bring what is in him out into consciousness, must learn to know himself, his powers and limitations. The artist must know the exact technique of his art, the musician the quality of each note, just as in all work the worker must know what effects will be produced by every cause he sets in motion, and must have acquired power over his tools. So culture demands patience, and study, and discipline, and all this can only come from courageous self-scrutiny. But the perfect fruits, either in the quality of work produced, or in the quality of character, can never be reached until this process, which began in self-consciousness, is lost in self-forgetfulness. The things which were at first painfully acquired, become organised into habit, and the methods, which before had to be carefully scanned and consciously selected, are now used by instinct. Self-conscious oratory, for example, must always

miss the mark; the audience can never forget the speaker, till he has forgotten himself in the great truth which burns and flames into sight. The culture, which remains self-conscious, has not attained to its fruition. Even the conscious intellectual superiority, which culture cannot but create, needs to be swallowed up in some larger sense of humility. In Matthew Arnold's poems, with all their wonderful interpretation of the modern mood of mind, and their deeply expressed sorrow that faith should be lost, there is also, as Mr. R. H. Hutton pointed out,[1] a constant tincture of pride in his confessed inability to believe, a self-congratulation that he is too clear-eyed to yield to the temptations of the heart; and this limits their scope and their power of appeal as poetry.

As an almost necessary corollary from the fact that culture as an intellectual scheme is liable to overestimate its sphere of influence, it follows also that it is always inclined to make too much of the mere means it employs. For example, in any full scheme of culture books will take a place, as being the record of what the best brains have thought and the finest hearts have felt, but these are only methods, means to be used. We know how such a valuable instrument of mental culture, as books undoubtedly are, can be grossly overvalued. Nothing needs more serious discrimination, even in the interests of true culture, and

[1] *Literary Essays*—'The Poetry of Matthew Arnold.'

nothing gets less, as a rule. There can be omnivorous reading without any real grasp of thought, or balance of judgment, or self-possession of mind; and there can be genuine culture, fineness of feeling, depth of insight, knowledge of the laws of life, without many of the ordinary educational advantages. All the essentials of culture will sometimes be found among humble people, with no knowledge of many books, though with supreme knowledge possibly of one or two; for it is not literature or art, as such, which brings culture, but the ripening of thought and of nature, producing nobility and elevation of mind. A rich culture is evidenced, not so much by the ready absorption into the mind of multifarious thoughts, as by the habit of thinking. The inclination to place an undue estimate on books is not confined to readers, but is often found in writers, with detriment to their own life, as in the danger to which Hare refers in *Guesses at Truth*, 'An author's blood will turn to ink. Words enter into him and take possession of him; and nothing can obtain admission except through the passport of words.'

Or take another of the supposed instruments of culture—travel. It assuredly affords opportunities of comparison and contrast with home, opportunities for enlarging and increasing knowledge and ideas; but sometimes it only hardens prejudice and blinds the eyes, so that an Englishman can return from the Grand Tour more insular than before. There is an

old Latin proverb about those who run across the sea and only change their sky, not their mind, not their real self. The man is not rare, whose knowledge of famous places he has visited consists in a knowledge of hotels and their *menu*. Emerson had some cause for his advice to his countrymen to try and extract the tapeworm of Europe from their brain, though he knew he would be accused of saying captious things about travel. Travel will not fill an empty mind: here, too, we see only what the heart gives us the power to see. It is a common human failing to set store on the means, and to forget the end. The workman, who thinks more of his tools than of his work, will do no work worth doing. This tendency to overestimate the instruments of culture, or its external results, is responsible for the sham culture, which makes good taste the standard of life, and so contents itself with a veneer of accomplishments, a dilettante knowledge of literature and art, a social polish of manner which does come from handling the tools of culture. It is this side, so often presented to the world—the empty smattering of so-called attainments, the amenities of refinement, serene elegance of life, suavity of manner, and sometimes an indifference to moral issues which masquerades in the garb of large-minded tolerance—which makes the very name of culture almost stink in the nostrils of every earnest man.

A still further evidence of the narrowness of such

culture lies in its exclusiveness. It is, confessedly according to its own high-priests, at present the property of a small and select coterie, and instead of missionary zeal to enlighten others it often breeds a more fastidious exclusiveness. It recalls the arrogance of the early world, which drew a line of demarcation between Greeks and all other races, the criterion being a higher civilisation, which classed every one not a Greek as a barbarian.[1] When the Romans absorbed the civilisation of Greece, they adopted the same classification, and slumped all outside races as beyond the pale: as in Cicero's remark, 'not only Greece and Italy, but also all Barbary' (*sed etiam omnis barbaria*). A similar exclusiveness is the curse of æstheticism. It is on a par with the religious exclusiveness of the Pharisees, who looked down with contempt on all outside their own caste. We remember Matthew Arnold's famous division of the population of England into Barbarians the aristocratic class, Philistines the middle class, and Populace the vast residuum, sullen, soulless, half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, the sterner part of it given over to bawling, hustling, and smashing, the lighter part given over to beer; and in addition to these comprehensive classes a few cultured individuals, who have sweetness and light.[2] Out of these three hopeless classes emerge an elect few, who follow humanity, who love perfection, and are nursed by culture. We must not blame him for this frank

[1] πᾶς μὴ Ἕλλην βάρβαρος. [2] *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. iii.

classification; for it is a logical conclusion from his position. Naturally and inevitably, if the standard is made an æsthetic one, the great mass of men are disfranchised. When the emphasis is laid on the accomplishments necessarily confined to a few, it is to be expected that these should develop an exclusiveness of spirit.

Even the Freemasonry, which similar studies produce, often means a thinly disguised contempt for outsiders. Emerson declared that one of the benefits of a college education was to show the boy how little it availed, but this negative value is not always seized; and Emerson himself could be quoted to show the intellectual hardness, if not the exclusiveness, which culture induces on men. In the essay on Self-Reliance, where he preaches the creed that a man should insist on himself and not imitate, he states what he calls the Doctrine of Hatred, to counteract the puling, whining doctrine of love. There is a class of persons, to whom by all spiritual affinity he is bought and sold, but 'do not tell me,' he says, 'as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong.' Emerson was personally saved from all that this seems to mean by his temper of mind, his idealism, his gentleness of heart. He was a generous, large-hearted man, but it can be seen what consis-

tency to such a creed would be, when Emerson declares it is with shame he confesses he sometimes succumbs, and gives the dollar to the philanthropist. In another essay[1] he says, 'The worst of charity is that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. Masses! the calamity is the masses. I do not wish any mass at all.' When he speaks of the mass of men existing only to be tamed, drilled, divided, and broken up, and all in order that certain individuals, select specimens made possible by the otherwise useless seething mass, may be formed out of them, we see that it is with the intellect, and not with the heart, that he approaches the sore problem of the world's misery and sin. Culture as an intellectual scheme can only appeal to a section. It is not given to all men to possess the artistic temperament, or even the capacity to appreciate poetry and art to any great extent; and though all men might become wise up to the limits of their nature, they could not all become learned. The work of the world for daily bread has to go on, and if the æsthetic ideal be the highest, the great bulk of mankind would necessarily be cut off from all hope of any realisation of it. Like Plato's mechanics, who, he declared, had no time to be ill and therefore demanded short shrift from their doctors when they consult them at all, the mass of men have no time to be so enormously cultivated. They have to make their living, and are beset by physical needs.

[1] *The Conduct of Life*—'Considerations by the Way.'

It is not necessary to stop to show how different from this the Christian ideal is, how it broke down the old barriers, which divided men according to Greek culture, and substituted the word brother for the word barbarian; and how it rebukes to-day all exclusiveness. The religious ideal has to do with character, and character is produced from the ordinary material of life, by duty, by service, by faith, by love, by goodness. If character be the ultimate test, mere refinement of intellect is nothing except an added and valuable instrument, which a man is called on to use to ennoble life. Like every gift, it carries its own temptation to abuse it; and probably strength of character, and true wisdom, will be found among the unlettered, among the handicraftsmen, as often as among the most highly educated; for the deepest culture of life is achieved by the ordinary labour, by the common tasks, by the daily work of the world. This practical education is often overlooked by those who lay such stress on books. It is not through abstract thought, but through action, through practical life, that even the deepest truth is discovered. There is no education like that which comes from genuine work, done in a workmanlike manner and in a sincere spirit. Goethe points the distinction in his well-known lines—

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.[1]

Everything in the long-run must be known by its

[1] 'Talent is formed in solitude; character in the stream of the world.'

fruits, and must be tested by how it fits in with, and affects, the vital relations in which men stand. The true life of a man or a nation does not consist in a taste for the fine arts, or the spinning of either words or theories, but in the moral qualities which go to the formation of character. Alfred de Musset's saying that it takes a great deal of life to make a little art is a true one: great art is the distillation of life, compressing in precious essence all that is implied in the larger material; but that is because, after all, life is larger than art, and life has so many interests to conserve, and chiefly its own continuance. The Renaissance, with all its wonderful resurrection of art, did not save Italy from decadence. All art must be grounded on the solid root-virtues of the people's character.

We are thus led, approaching the question from another point, to see the danger to which culture exposes itself by any short-sighted exclusiveness. Just because it is tempted to stand off in haughty isolation from the vital interests and movements that make history, it sometimes seems anti-social in its tendency, with a disguised selfishness as its sole motive. That way is death to itself, and wrong to the world. It becomes enfeebled in its petty cliques and castes, without a breath from the real world of men and action to vitalise it. If divorced from the movements and broad life of its time, it loses all power of creative work, concerning itself with peddling criticisms and empty erudition, and the

result on men of culture is disastrous, leading to poverty of soul in the long-run. So strong is this temptation that John Morley, himself a distinguished man of letters, writing of a man of letters, suggests that the only possible safeguard is for such to seek to do some social work. 'Active interest in public affairs is the only sure safeguard against this inhuman egotism, otherwise so nearly inevitable, and in any wise so revolting, of men of letters and men of science.'[1] After all, it is a narrow sort of culture which shuts itself off from life, and it could be easily shown that such will destroy itself, and must ultimately make the very æsthetic ideal itself impossible. All true development must be social, and must affect the whole of society, as nothing else can be permanent. This is necessary for the sake of the individual, quite apart from any higher ideal of service of others. The culture of the ancient world lacked durability, just because it did not extend down far enough, and because it thus made the social state top-heavy by being exclusively lavished on a few. The palace is not safe, when it is surrounded by nothing but hovels. Culture is not safe, when it sits aloof in scorn of the hustling, bawling populace. If it has any sweetness and light, the only way, even as a practical policy to secure them ultimately for the cultured class, is to diffuse them right through the social organism. It is because society is an organism, and the head suffers with the hand and the foot

[1] Morley, *Voltaire*.

suffers with the eye, that no scheme which concerns itself solely with the individual, can be a final one.

The conclusion we arrive at, from all that has been advanced above, is that, while self-culture is a legitimate and necessary aim, it is not a complete end for human life. It is only one side, though a very important one, and needs to be supplemented and raised to a higher point, and used as a means for a larger end than itself. Only this can save it from the inevitable degradation that must befall it, if it remain on the lower level as an ideal for self. Not even its achievements and conquests, not even creative genius in art, and brilliant discoveries in science, can suffice for life, if there be not an inspiring force grander than the desire to reach self-development.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURE AS RELIGION

RELIGION is a natural outgrowth in man. When man began to think and wonder and feel, he began to have a religion. It is a universal fact of history, because it is a fact of human nature. Wherever there is man, there is religion. The dawn of social life among men is the dawn of religion. It has been asserted by some, that they have not been able to recognise any sort of religion in certain savage tribes, very low down in the scale of civilisation, though the evidence for this assertion is by no means conclusive; but even if it should prove to be correct, it will mean that only the most degraded and lowest savages, those least like men, are destitute of religion; so that want of religion is a sign of lack of civilisation. No theory of the universe can hope to live unless it satisfies, or satisfactorily disposes of, the facts of human nature on which religion is based. Of course some materialists get rid of the subject altogether by flatly denying that there is a place for religion, and it must be admitted that in their scheme of things there is not much room for

anything which can with decency be called religion. But in any case we have the fact of religion as an existing reality, and as far as history goes back, a universal reality. That man is incurably religious is as much a scientific fact as any fact can be, proven from observation and history. The mere blunt denial of the spiritual in man is not sufficient, even though the denial be accompanied by a sentimental regret that man's life should be so grievously curtailed, like Professor Clifford's sad confession of a godless creed, 'We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven to light a soulless earth; we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead.' That dreary view, however, cannot be the permanent one, even with those who refuse the consolations of religion, and so we find even materialism seeking to find a substitute for religion.

The need for some sort of religion for any theory, which claims to cover all the ground, arises also from the difficulty of getting men to rest in negations for very long. There must be something to gain proselytes, and to have a centre for a system, which can supply the want created by the loss of the old. After negation has done its work of dissolving the old faith, what then? All power of infidelity lies in its criticism of faith, not in its preaching of unfaith. Secular lecturers may catch fire, as they denounce what they conceive to be the falsehood and hypocrisy in present-day religion, but atheism as a creed, or want of creed, cannot captivate the imagination, and

infuse thought with emotion, and inspire missionaries. Only a religion can uproot a religion. It has been so all through history, and human nature has not changed, nor human needs been abolished. Only the passion of a new faith can displace an old one. From history also we see that religion has exercised hitherto the supreme influences on man; and that the nobler and purer the religion of a people is, the grander are their works and life. So much is this the reading of the facts, that all who are concerned about the future of the race admit that the greatest of all questions is the religious one; for they see that if our civilisation is to live at all it can only be by religion, since there is nothing else that can save it from the dangers that menace it. So strong is this assurance that we find men, who have given up the Christian faith, and even the faith in a personal God, seeking for some religion to take the place of the one which they have dispossessed; Comte and the positivists substituting the worship of humanity for the worship of God; some culturists making culture itself religion; even some materialists offering, as a fit object of worship, the universe, the grand sum total of the order of things.

It is with the claim of culture that we have to do at present, though it is difficult to get the claim put into plain English, as sometimes it is represented as chiefly a scientific conception of the grandeur of law, and sometimes as a literary and artistic reverence, and again it is a glorified self-worship, slipping

indeed sometimes into a sort of vague spiritualism—the one unvarying element being that they are all attempts to have a religion without God. The ablest of these attempts on behalf of culture is perhaps Professor Seeley's in his *Natural Religion*, and it is the most interesting as coming from the author of *Ecce Homo*. His thesis is that for modern conditions religion to the individual may be identified with culture, and in its public aspect, as a sort of national or international religion, it may be identified with civilisation. He begins with the definition that religion in its root idea is admiration. Religion in the Christian sense is to him too limited, too exclusively concerned with the contemplation of the good, given up to the exercise of the benevolent affections and the moral virtues, all well enough in their way, but making up only a fragment of life. He would not displace that altogether, but would merely supplement it with two other elements, which demand the same worshipful contemplation, the beautiful and the true, in all making a threefold religious cord strong enough for modern life to hang by, though he thinks they need not be combined in every individual. Since the artist admires beauty and may be said to worship it, and the naturalist admires truth and is bowed in awe before the mystery and order of physical law, these are to be elevated into the place of conscious and accepted religion, on a level with the other worship of goodness.

The religion which is to inspire our civilisation is that threefold devotion: first, of science, which is concerned with eternal law, and which has many intellectual virtues, such as definiteness of conception, accuracy of observation, conscientiousness, and patience; then the spirit of humanity, with all the practical virtues of honesty, help to the weak, respect for women, and love of liberty, which is the fragment saved from the wreck of Christianity; and lastly, the enjoyment of nature, a legacy from Greece, and preserved to the world by artists and poets, a fragment saved from the wreck of Paganism. We are not to expect these three strands united in one character—indeed Professor Seeley is led to make this distinction in modern religion from the common experience of finding only one of them in different men. He finds the artist cherishing a secret grudge against morality, and believing that our morality prevents us from rivalling the arts of Greece, and convinced that on his deathbed he would rather be able to reflect that he had painted a really good picture, or written a really good poem, than that he had done his duty under great temptations and at great sacrifices. He finds the scientific investigator living a life to which the platitudes current about virtue have no application; with the gradual disuse of all habits except the habit of thought and study, instead of the gradual formation of virtuous habits which moralists demand; with perpetual self-absorption, without what is commonly

called selfishness; total disregard of other people, along with unceasing labour for the human race; a life free from gross evil, yet without any love or heavenly communion in it. He too would rather have advanced our knowledge of the laws of the universe if only by a step, than have lived the most virtuous life, and died the most self-sacrificing death. The two ideals of art and science are simply out of relation to what we call morality, virtue and vice, right and wrong; yet these two ideals, Seeley thinks, may truly be called religious, because both produce elevated feelings—feelings that lift a man above himself, admiration become habitual, and raised into a principle of life. Instead of the religion of right to which the moralist subscribes, one has the religion of beauty, the other the religion of law and truth; and both join with the moralist in denouncing the mere worldling, the man who does not know any exalted feeling of admiration, who is devoted to nothing, without soul for beauty or for truth, and therefore without religion.

To be quite fair to Seeley's position we must remember that it is offered in the interests of what he thinks the higher life, as opposed to the dominant secular tendencies of our age, and because he feels that there has never been a time when the necessity of religion, in the broad sense of the word, has been so clear. He is concerned that so many artists should paint falsely, and so many literary men write hastily, for money; and that men born to be philo-

sophers, or scientific discoverers, or moral reformers, should 'end ignominiously in large practice at the bar.' He would recall men in all these spheres to the religious sacredness of their work. He looks to an ideal community, where the cares of livelihood would not absorb the mind, taming all impulse, and depressing the spirit with a base anxiety; a community which will learn to reason with scientific rigour, and at the same time hope with Christian enthusiasm, and also enjoy with Pagan freshness. The art and science, to which he looks as opponents of secularity, are not of the world, though they may be corrupted by the world. The feelings they arouse have the nature of religion, different from the religion which has hitherto been associated chiefly with morality, manifesting itself in other ways than ordinary morals, but truly religious and essential to the higher life of man. It is really religion revived under the new name of culture, leading to a life inspired by what can be called religious admiration and devotion. It is a larger conception of religion which he seeks to expound, and the three forms in which it manifests itself constitute culture, summed up by Goethe as life in the Whole, in the Good, in the Beautiful, which Seeley identifies with science, morality, and art.

We must also grant, and gladly grant, a truth in Professor Seeley's argument, that the pursuit of the beautiful in art, and of the true in science, are right ends to be followed by men who are endowed in

these branches, and are well worthy to be classed as aspects of religion; and we gladly admit that men may be brought into a religious mind through these spheres—nay, further, may be brought to God, through the works of beauty and of order, which do reveal Himself. But there is some looseness of language in the definition. There is in all religion an element of worship, of adoration, but there is a distinction between that and admiration. It is true that irreligion may fairly be defined as life without worship, but it is to empty the word of its meaning to make worship merely the possession of some object of habitual contemplation, which makes life rich to a man, and of which he thinks and speaks with ardour. It is not necessarily religious to admire a picture, however beautiful, or a landscape, or even the planets in their orbits, which illustrate the wonder and order of law. It is only by a poetic licence that we can speak of adoring these things, because we happen to admire them very much; but we can be said—and this is the religious aspect of both art and science—through the admiration of these works of God's hands, to adore Him, whose adorable qualities are revealed by them. Admiration stops at the object admired, and is limited to the finite; adoration goes past the object to the infinite. So while admiration may lead to adoration, the distinction between the two attitudes is not one merely of degree. Admiration could never inspire such an attitude of self-prostration

and self-surrender, as is implied in an act of prayer. It is a confusion of thought to make admiration, however sincere and ardent, equivalent to adoration. Admiration carries with it a certain assumption of equality and almost self-esteem, as when we admire a picture, we put ourselves in the position of a critic, and compare it with our own ideal; while worship is the prostration of the soul in self-forgetful adoration before something, which transcends all human criticism and all standards of comparison. We feel the full force of the distinction if we transpose the terms, and speak of 'admiring' God, and 'adoring' a man. To use the two words as synonymous, or as if they were on the same level, is to confuse the plain meaning of words.

Further, in the three forms of religion which are supposed to constitute culture, we might object that the Christian faith is set down in impossibly narrow terms, making it mean what it has never meant to any soul that has accepted it. It is stated as if it implied opposition to the other spheres of beauty and truth, as if an artist or a scientist could not also at the same time be a Christian, which is absurd, seeing that the greatest of both spheres have been, and are, sincere believers, in spite of the blatant screaming of a noisy few. The Christian religion is more than admiration of the good in the sense of the moral. It is inclusive in its scope. Some apostles of culture speak with great condescension, as if they tolerated religion as a graceful addition

to life, a possible ornament and charm to a man, an extra element of culture, a delightful development of the æsthetic side, when such is possible without passion and too fervent zeal, which would mar the sweet harmony. They would tolerate even a little harmless superstition that would be consistent with a graceful bearing. Religion can never accept the position of a sort of supernumerary, an extra pinch of salt to give piquancy to life. That is to dethrone religion, and to empty the word of all significance: it is not what religion has hitherto meant in all its history. Religion claims to be life itself, covering all the ground of life, so much so that even the so-called culture must justify itself according to how it ministers to that life. Religion is not the narrowing, the impoverishment of life, as if either art, or science, or any other human activity were outside its scope: it claims to glorify every region it touches, making the very body a holy thing, consecrating mind, and imagination, and heart. Historically, Christianity brought expansion of thought, and feeling, and life; and it brings the same expansion still, whenever a man opens his eyes to the wonder and his heart to the love of God.

Going still deeper into this proposed religion of culture, we must condemn it as a religion on the ground that it cannot be made a universal ideal. Professor Seeley does valiantly strive to show how it might be made an ideal for all, and even how it might be made a missionary religion, with real zeal

for the enlightenment of heathen races abroad, as well as the benighted Philistines and Barbarians at home. He pleads for some organisation of the new religion to carry on the vast work ready to its hands, and almost calls for missionary volunteers to do for it what was done for Christianity by St. Paul, and Gregory, and Xavier, and Eliot, and Livingstone. What is the message the missionaries are supposed to take? It is almost too funny for a comedy, though it is unkind to laugh at zeal of any sort. 'Let us carry the true view of the Universe, the true astronomy, the true chemistry, and the true physiology to polytheists still lapped in mythological dreams; let us carry progress and free-will to fatalist nations, and to nations cramped by the fetters of primitive custom; let us carry the doctrine of rational liberty into the heart of Oriental despotisms; in doing all this—not indeed suddenly, or fanatically, not yet pharisaically, as if we ourselves had nothing to learn—we shall admit the outlying world into the great civilised community, into the modern City of God.'[1] It is a strange missionary programme to speak of to men who have known, by hearsay at least, of the passion of the missionaries of the cross; and we may well conclude that it will not be done either suddenly or fanatically. Seeley's missionary enthusiasm is, as a matter of fact, like much else of our modern sentiment, part of the unconscious influence of Christianity. For the ideal

[1] *Natural Religion*, Part II. ch. IV.

of culture is from the nature of the case an impossible one for all, being intellectual and æsthetic, and the majority of men would necessarily be excluded by their inhospitable environment from partaking in it.

So much is this the case that, as we saw in a previous chapter, the prevailing temptation of the very high priests of the new religion, the artists and scientists, is that of contempt for the outside mass who cannot appreciate or understand their special subjects. That contempt of, or impatience with, the unlearned has always been the great temptation of intellect. Plato, who makes the philosopher the ideal man, and speaks of him with a religious enthusiasm equal to Professor Seeley's, had, however, a calmer judgment of the facts, for he confesses that there must always be few of them. 'Every one will admit that a nature, having in perfection all the qualities which are required in a philosopher, is a rare plant which is seldom seen among men.'[1] The basis of the new creed is wholly an intellectual one, and it is farcical to speak of it as a possible religious ideal. Celsus, who has been aptly called the Voltaire of the second century, in his polemic against Christianity made this a point, rightly enough from his standpoint, that a universal religion, such as Christianity claimed to be, was impossible. 'If any one supposes that it is possible that the peoples of Asia, and Europe, and Africa, Greeks,

[1] *Republic*, vi. 491.

and barbarians, should agree to follow one law, he is hopelessly ignorant.'[1] He was judging from the standpoint of the schools, and, imagining Christianity to be only another intellectual system, he put his finger on the weak spot of all such systems.

Christianity, however, began from another direction, with the recognition of human worth, and put a new value on human nature as such, just because it did not make an intellectual standard for religion; and for the same reason it recognised no distinction of race, or class, and made its appeal to all, irrespective of status, and condition, and place in the scale of culture. It took for granted that in every man there was the capacity for the divine, dwarfed and distorted but indestructible. It appealed directly to the primary instincts, to the innate moral element as being capable of growth. The present state of the conscience and the soul might be rudimental, but infinite possibility lay there. Thus it stamped human nature with inherent nobility and grandeur. It brought a man past all disabilities of station, or culture, or race, right into the presence of God, opening up to him complete fellowship, giving him all the rights of a man, though he had been the poorest slave or the most despised outcast. No chemistry, or astronomy, or physiology, however true as compared with his own blind notions of such things, could have brought

[1] Celsus, ap. Orig. *c. Cels.* viii. 72.

such expansion of life, such accession of human dignity, such redemptive power, as that assurance that God cared for him and claimed him as a son. Any form of culture turned into a religion is bound to become an esoteric creed, and since it is an intellectual religion it must receive the fate of all philosophies. That can never be religiously true, which condemns the great mass of men to a state of spiritual serfdom for the benefit of the favoured few.

The attempt is due to a meagre view of human nature, which looks upon intellect as the highest flower of man. But the highest kind of knowledge, which is peculiarly religious, is not reached by pure reason, by intellect carefully balancing probabilities of evidence, as the mind must do in the chemistry and physiology of the new missionary programme. The highest kind of knowledge is the fruit of intuition, and imagination, and feeling, and mind combined in one fervid glow, intellect gleaming with inspiration, though suffused with emotion. In other words, it takes all the faculties of man together to grasp truth at its highest. Intellectualism, that is any method which approaches the problems of life otherwise than by moral and spiritual means, can never oust religion from its place. It does not touch the centre of life. It would seek to regenerate man and make him moral, or get the same results as morality, by enlightening him. Religion enlightens him by regenerating him. And therefore

the methods of the two are as different as their aims.

Intellectualism works by brain, religion by heart: the one appeals to knowledge, the other to love. Reason is a destructive and critical, not a constructive, power; but the human relations are built on feeling, not on reason or knowledge. We are not bound to each other as a nation, as a family, as a church, or in any association and relationship, by abstract principles of thought. Good reasons may be found out why we should be so bound together, but the reasons are only an afterthought, an explanation of the actual state of affairs. All the permanent relations of life have other sanctions besides reason. No association of men can be kept vital, and even long kept together at all, on merely prudential and reasonable grounds. Men are united by ties of blood, and brotherhood, and common faith, and common love. No church could be kept together for a month on an intellectual basis merely. It is bound by memory, and by association, by a faith that transcends reason, by sacred mysteries, by love, and service, and worship, independent of the sanctions of logic. If then the human relations are built on feeling, religion, the fount and spring of which is love, is in the very citadel of life.

The real crux of the question raised by the claims of culture is that man needs not enlightenment merely, but redemption. In the ultimate issue the

question is one of education *versus* regeneration. It is naïvely assumed that men will be elevated into newness of life, if only they can be brought into contact with what has been best said and imagined by poets and writers and artists, as one school of culture insists; or if they can be got to listen to the clear teaching of the best thinkers about the laws of nature, as another school put it. The world is not so sure as it has sometimes been that crime would disappear, if only we had better machinery of education; yet it is the constant mistake of humanism that intellectual emancipation is enough, as if enlightenment, the teaching of art and science and the sum total of what is vaguely called civilisation, were enough to save the world. It cannot even save the individual. Philosophy is a feeble antagonist before passion. Even when its teaching is correct, it cannot give an adequate motive in the presence of temptation, such a motive as the love of Christ and the passion for His purity has been in countless lives. In the period of Greek decadence we see how weak the most elaborately reasoned philosophy is before even much lower forms of thought. The idea of God, reached by the great poets and thinkers of Greece, was infinitely higher than that of the local superstitions or of the foreign mysticisms, and yet these latter completely submerged the higher idea. The nobler thought only appealed to men as an intellectual apprehension, and never sent its roots deep into the conscience and

heart. Any so-called religion of culture is really a philosophy in disguise, taking as its method education of mind.

The deepest point at issue is the *question of sin*, which is quietly ignored in the religion of culture. There is no mention of sin. It is overlooked as if no such thing existed even as a question, though sin is a common factor of all religious experience known in history, as the almost universality of sacrifice in some form proves. It makes no attempt to explain the consciousness of guilt, in which omission culture is not alone. It is a necessity for any theory, which attempts a naturalistic explanation of the world and man, to eliminate the question of sin; for to admit sin is to admit something outside the great chain of cause and effect, something which is not strictly natural. To them, what we call sin is not the fruit of an evil but free will; it is a natural appearance, neither in itself to be praised or blamed, like acorns on an oak. We are justified in asking from any system of thought, which claims to unseat religion from its supremacy, first of all an adequate treatment of the fact we call sin. A religion of culture without God must either deny the reality of sin at all, or define it as simply the imperfection involved in finite being. This has the effect of destroying the moral view of evil, and it only explains a very few of the facts which the conscience of man classes as sins. It may cover faults of ignorance and mistakes that could not be avoided, but it has nothing to

say to the real sins of life, the fruit of evil will. The long black list which St. Paul gives as the works of the flesh[1] cannot be dismissed as shortcomings and deficiencies. A theory, which thus volatilises evil by calling it imperfection, and which thus empties sin of any moral significance, cannot command our adherence. Its standards of human perfection are purely artificial. At bottom there is the tacit denial of the spiritual element in man; for, of course, if man's being is limited to the finite, then a life lived on the plane of nature, satisfying sense and impulse, cannot know sin. It is neither moral nor immoral, but only unmoral.

We see how wide of the mark is the idea that science or art can be made a religion for the heart of man; for neither of them touch the deepest things, and neither of them have anything to say to sin, and thus practically, through omitting the fact of sin, they minimise or omit the ethical. The religious view of human nature seems to collide with the natural tendency of the artistic mind, which is easily blinded to the ugly facts represented by the term sin, the discord in the universal harmony, and which loves to dwell on the beauty and grace of the world, and the achievements of the human mind. Similarly, the religious view of human nature seems at complete variance with the natural tendency of the scientific mind, which seeks to find everywhere the ordered march of evolution without any hiatus in the steps.

[1] Gal. v. 19-21.

The existence of sin, a state of revolt against the true order of man's life, the consequent need of redemption, all the facts and forces which make up the Christian view, suggest a system, which seems the obtrusion of an alien force into the realm of law. But this is due to a too exclusive consideration of one set of facts, looking to Nature as if man were not a part of it, forgetful that the facts of man's life must also be included among the facts to be explained.

Let us suppose a scientific culture so profoundly worshipful that it can be called religion, which is the contention—science raised to the religious pitch, so to speak. Such a science must have something to say about the nature within, as well as the nature without. It would accept the moral standards already attained by man; it would admit that a man must have his passions in curb, that he should be of strong will and susceptible conscience, should have a high standard of probity in his dealings with others, even should love others as himself. But it kicks away the ladder by which man rose to this, and does not reveal any means of rising higher, to say nothing of how he is to maintain his ground already won. It is by moral discipline that man has come to such virtues, a moral discipline wielded by the strong hand of religion. It has to be proved that men can even stand in the position of morality, which Christian ethics enjoins, if you take away the force of the Christian motive. Assuming, however, that all these moral qualities could have come with-

out the long religious training of the race, imagine a man who may be called a religious man on this scientific basis. He will have complete respect to the laws of the world, will admire the order of things to such an extent that he may be said to worship the Power behind all physical phenomena; and in addition he will possess some of the highest qualities of human nature, be sensitive in feeling and conscience, choosing right and loving right. If he thinks there can be no correspondence between what is best in himself and the Supreme Power, no real response to his own noblest attributes, nothing that can be called sympathy between his highest moral nature and the non-moral Power that rules by law, how can he possibly have towards such a scheme of things feelings, that by any meaning that can be put into language can be termed worship, or that are worthy to be called religion? It is playing with words. A man's religion must represent the highest he knows, and in this case the highest he knows is in himself, not in the supreme Power he yet is supposed to worship.

Such a view of the universe puts the highest qualities of man at a discount, and on such a purely naturalistic basis it is difficult to see how morality could ever get above the level of prudence, and worldly wisdom, and the guarded acceptance of some occult moral cause and effect, which a wise man will see does not come into collision with himself. Not so has man hitherto come to his noblest;

not so have earth's greatest sons suffered sorrow, and borne the burden of being men. They have attained to the moral heights by a consciousness of the divine presence, and by a calm acceptance of the divine will, which has had nothing of prudential morality in it. They have been enabled to endure and make sacrifice by the thought that, though possibly misunderstood on earth, they are understood in heaven, and have the sympathy and smile of God. The sense of God's presence has done for them what no worldly motive could do. As a matter of fact, true science does not arrogate to itself this high claim of being a religion in itself, made on its behalf. When it is unbelieving, it simply ignores religion, and goes on ploddingly collating, and observing, and deducing. When it is believing, it knows that religion has higher sanctions than those that can be gathered from the knowledge of material forces. The man of science who is religious, is religious in the same way as his humblest brother, who has also seen the vision. It has not been through his science, though that can give him ampler thoughts and deeper reverence. It is because he too has opened his heart to God, and submitted his will and life to the Highest. It is because he too has come into relation with the God of his being, and made submission of heart and obedience of will.

A similar criticism can be passed on art raised to the religious pitch. That also is to play with words; for the keenest enjoyment of beauty, and the deepest

feelings that can be stirred by it, cannot be called religious, unless a man gets past the beautiful things to the ideal beauty behind them. The so-called religion of science treats of the universe apart from man, and the highest moral and spiritual qualities in man. And the so-called religion of art treats of man apart from God. It is bound to degenerate into a vague poetry of nature, an æsthetic appreciation of beautiful forms; and to attempt to make a religion of it would mean the sickening repetition of the cult of the æsthete, with their esoteric doctrines about art, which result in the death of art itself. It must be reasserted that the *moral* basis of life is necessary, if only to give the foundation on which anything permanent in art, or in any other region of man's activity, can be securely built. When intellect in Greece was at its keenest, and art at its best, and political life was organised to its highest, there was in Greek society a corroding evil, which sapped the foundations, and hurled the whole beautiful superstructure to the ground. Matthew Arnold is nearer the truth than Professor Seeley in the emphasis he put on righteousness, on conduct, as three-fourths of life. Artistic culture by itself, even if dignified by being called a religion, becomes at best a dainty selfishness, and at worst a blighting egotism. It puts the emphasis on self, makes self-improvement the only end, which carries with it the temptation of self-absorption, and the darker temptation ever lurking near of pandering to every taste and impulse.

Religion puts the emphasis on God, reaches out towards the altogether lovely, and so reacts to make a sweeter and deeper selfhood. And, of course, such a conception of religion takes no account of revelation, of God making Himself known to man in the world of beauty, and of law, and of moral good. It imprisons God, and makes Him dumb and blind; and really calls upon man to worship an abstraction.

Further, in keeping with the position which makes God an abstraction, and which makes sin a strange myth which somehow has afflicted men, it takes away any moral meaning from human life. The Christian faith at least sees discipline in life, and has glimpses of a great end which partly explains suffering and sorrow, and can even see how man is being made perfect through suffering. No man with a rich, deep life but has known pain in himself, or through others. The mystery of evil in the world, the mystery of sorrow in life, imply that sacrifice must be in every noble soul. To say then that there is no meaning in suffering, but blind strokes of fate, the cruel crushing of the wheels of law, without purpose, without intelligence, and without pity, makes the heart revolt. The world is full of sorrow. There is a divine meaning in it to the religious soul, and even when he cannot explain, he can believe; but what has this new religion to offer to the children of affliction? In the face of the deep human necessities, to speak of the religious consolations of a cultivated

intelligence in art or science is cruel mockery. It suggests the irony of Hotspur, who describes how a certain lord came on the field after the battle, perfumed like a milliner, daintily handling his pouncet-box between finger and thumb, and, as the soldiers bore the dead bodies past, called them unmannerly knaves to bring a slovenly unhandsome corse betwixt the wind and his nobility.

> He made me mad,
> To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet,
> And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman
> Of guns, and drums, and wounds, (God save the mark !)
> And telling me, the sovereign'st thing on earth
> Was parmaceti for an inward bruise.[1]

We can see the desperate inadequacy of this refined religion, when we bring it face to face with the needs of man, and find that for the sorrow of life, and the mystery of death, and the passion and the tears, it offers 'parmaceti for an inward bruise.'

We must therefore respectfully refuse to let such an emasculated religion displace the faith on all these several counts—first, that it is not and cannot be a universal ideal, but could only be reserved for some spiritual aristocracy; that it does not give an adequate moral motive, nor offer a stable moral foundation for life; and that it does not satisfy the facts of our nature, nor make provision for either sin or sorrow. And all its failure is due to the fact that it tries to have a religion without God.

[1] First Part of King Henry IV., Act I. Sc. 3.

Religion is born of need, an upward longing look, a cry, an unsatisfied desire. The heart, awakened to this sense of need, can only find peace in fellowship with God. Religion has its roots here, and needs the personal element. Only thus can it be made a universal ideal, open to every child of need; and only thus can it give the adequate motive, and only thus can it satisfy the facts of our nature. A profounder philosophy, therefore, than the specious abstraction of culture is it to say with Martineau, 'By religion I understand the belief and worship of Supreme Mind and Will, directing the universe and holding moral relations with human life.'[1] To raise morality into religion, and thus conserve morality itself, we need a personal God in whom the moral law is enshrined. So the New Testament connects all the transforming power of religion, not with moral commandments and precepts, but with a Personality. It centralises everything in a Person, and brings to bear the highest and strongest motives possible. Where love is absent or impossible, adoring worship in the highest sense is impossible. So that, while man has the capacity to love, no religion is worthy of him which does not demand from him supreme love; and only love can call forth love. Religion is impossible to the man, whose highest thought about the world is that it is ruled by blind force, unconscious, unthinking, unmeaning power; for the worshipper would be higher than the object of worship, since he possesses

[1] J. Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, i. 15.

consciousness, and personality, and will, and is able to think, and know, and love.

> For the loving worm within its clod
> Were diviner than a loveless God
> Amid His worlds, I will dare to say.

Religion, if it is to express the highest capacity of adoration and worship, demands the concrete, and cannot be put off with an abstraction; and so needs the personal element, which indeed we find in every deeply religious utterance, as that of the Psalmist, 'O God, Thou art my God'[1]—Jehovah the eternal, self-existent, Supreme God, with moral qualities, merciful, just, loving, and above all holy; and revealing Himself as such to men.

We can see also what a powerful motive this brings to man, lifting thought, and feeling, and life to high levels. There can be no such motive as this personal one of love; and that is the deathless grip which Jesus has taken of the world. So strong is it, that John S. Mill confesses, though he weakens the motive by making it an imaginative one, 'Nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'[2] And when the motive is no supposititious case, but expresses a real state of feeling and of fellowship, what can surpass it as a motive? The consciousness of a relation with God, acquiescence in the supreme will, endued with

[1] Psalm lxiii. 1. [2] J. S. Mill, *Theism*, p. 255.

eternal hope through faith in eternal love, the consciousness of serving Him whose service is perfect freedom, evokes the highest in man, and gives an adequate support even for the possible calamities of mortal life. Faith in God is the only defence against affliction, because the only explanation of it.

This heart-hunger for God, which is the deepest reading of human history, is a tacit argument for that which will supply it. We expect correspondence between an instinct and that which will satisfy it, between a faculty and its object, between a need and its fulfilment. We were made for God; it is written in every aspiration, and breathed in every prayer; we were born for the love of God. No work, no engrossment, or culture of natural powers, will satisfy a man who has once wakened to his heart-need. Only a faith like that expressed in the great words of St. Augustine[1] can satisfy: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in Thee.'

We hear much every now and again of a recrudescence of the Higher Paganism, of Hellenic revivals, of attempts to reintroduce an outworn manner of life with its affected simplicity, the 'healthy sensuality' of the Greek, as it has been admiringly called. It is the stupidest of all affectations to imagine that we can roll back the tide of the years, and denude ourselves of what the

[1] *Confessions*, I. i., 'Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.'

centuries have brought. It was possible for the ancient Greeks to live a life built on the plane of nature; but before we could do it we would need to empty ourselves of all our past ethical and spiritual education. Even on their own principles of pseudo-science, the religion we are now offered is a foolish one. Even in the name of natural religion we can never go back to the religion of nature. The watchword of modern science is evolution, which implies the progress from the simple to the more complex; so on that principle religion, like all else, should evolve and become more articulate; as indeed has been the case. The world has surely not come thus far in the matter of religion to have to turn back empty-handed, having gained nothing spiritually from the past. The old problem of the whence and the whither and the wherefore still tortures the mind of man, and he cannot for long find peace in merely shutting his eyes. Bacon[1] said he would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud or the Koran than deny the being of the Universal Mind—that is, he thought better religion, even with the danger of superstition, than the hopeless darkness of unbelief. But the alternatives are not only superstition or practical atheism. We are asked to accept the evidences of our own spiritual nature and its needs, and to seek, and not to be content without, an adequate supply for the needs. Any form of

[1] Essays, xvi., *Of Atheism.*

nature-worship is a reversion to an outworn type. A frank, sprightly worldliness, such as we are told satisfied the Greek, can never again satisfy men, who have seen the vision. The glad natural joys, which could satiate pagan hearts, will ever be as ashes to the taste of those who have known higher joys and loved a higher love. No contemplation of beauty, no skill in art, no enthusiasm about the progress of the race, no acceptance of scientific triumphs in manipulating mechanics and harnessing natural powers to the use of man, can fill up the empty heart. We have known better things, believed larger things, dreamed nobler dreams, and 'an eye shall haunt us, looking ancient kindness on our pain.' The malady of the ideal is ours; and the memory of a lost love is enough to turn everything to dust.

We have seen that to take culture out of its legitimate place and elevate it to a religion is to produce only a sham religion; yet those who have made the attempt have been moved by a sense of the necessity of religion. Lange, the historian of materialism, speaks of the danger to our modern civilisation, because the ideal has such limited currency among us; and all who know the tendencies of to-day must feel the truth of this. They are right, who think that only religion can avert the danger, but in the days of its power religion was always connected with the idea of a personal God; so that religion in all languages means

fellowship of some sort with God; and the worth of the religion depends on the quality and character of the fellowship. Religion, according to itself, is the nexus between the human soul and the divine spirit. This is the consistent view of the Bible, till it culminates in the Christian faith, with its pure spiritual communion through Jesus Christ, who is the perfect way of access to the Father. The religious man always speaks in language of personal relationship with God, and the value of it as religion depends on the meaning which he can put into this relationship, and that again is conditioned by the character of the God he worships.

According to the nature of a man's faith in God, so is his religion. If the conception of the divine be low and unworthy, the religion which is built on that conception can only be like it. This is to be expected, and indeed history reveals it to be a fact. We can easily see how it should work out so. If a man believes that the world is the sport of chance, there is no room for principle to be solidly built. If he believes that the world is governed by law, his life must conform to some fixed principles, if he is to be true to his faith. Then, everything will depend on what his idea of law is. If it is viewed as blind force, the relentless working-out of cause and effect, his whole attitude will be different to that of the man who looks upon the law as the beneficent will of a just and gracious law-giver. Our life is bound to follow the fortunes

of our faith. Similarly, we can see how religion will be different with men who each believe in a personal God. It will be affected by the character of the God. If He is to us as an hard man reaping where he has not strawed, it is natural to do as the man in the parable, who hid his talent in the earth. Different qualities of fear, and reverence, and love, come in and colour the particular worship, according to the light in which God is regarded. If He be to us the Father whom Jesus revealed, we must stand to Him as children, and the richer our thought of the Heavenly Father is, the richer will be the filial relationship in which we stand. Everything depends on what we make the word God connote. Our worship, our fellowship, the faith by which we live, the terms of the communion, will all be determined by that.

Alongside of such a powerful motive as any true personal relationship gives, we can see the futility of a vague abstraction like culture. 'Ideas and sacrifices,' says Lange, 'may still save our civilisation and change the path of destructive revolution into a path of beneficent reforms.' But the ideas and sacrifices, which can save a people, have hitherto been only born of religion; and culture has no real religion to offer, to save the world from the doom of itself. It cannot be done by a weak æstheticism, which seeks salvation in what is a mere sensuous enjoyment in natural beauty. Life must base itself on moral sanctions, must have the idea of duty

for one thing embedded in it, must be capable of sacrifice for noble ends and of the love which transcends self. This is the conscious or unconscious faith of every noble soul. Huxley closes his lecture on 'Evolution and Ethics' with this strident note, though it is really a contradiction of his position in many respects. He declares that if we may permit ourselves any large hope of abatement of the essential evil of the world, 'I deem it an essential condition of the realisation of that hope that we should cast aside the notion that the escape from pain and sorrow is the proper object of life.'[1]

The moral sanctions, the idea of duty, the capacity for sacrifice and love, which are needed, are at the foundation of the religion of Christ. He touches the highest and the deepest chords in the nature of man. He reveals God in nature, interpretating afresh to us what psalmists and poets have seen in the sky, and the mountains, and the clouds, and the sea, giving a new colour to the world, with a light that never was on sea or land. He reveals God in history, filling up the past with meaning and purpose, a meaning of love, a purpose to redeem. He reveals God to us in our life to-day, glorifying the meanest lot, making life to all an arena for discipline of character, and preparation for larger life, and for the display of virtues and powers which claim and receive the interest of heaven. We live not by bread alone but by every

[1] The Romanes Lecture, 1893.

word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, and He is the Word, making the world and life intelligible. To follow Him is to fulfil our own highest destiny. To love Him is to love all that is lovely and beautiful and true and of good report in the world and man, and if there be any virtue and any praise to think of these things. His faith alone makes any adequate provision for that dread fact of sin which has blighted life and burdened the conscience; it sets a man in the love of God, and when he enters there he finds that he is pardoned, and reconciled, and dowered with peace. If it is a fact that man is by nature and instinct religious, it is no less a fact that the religion of Jesus is the only religion which is at the bar of the world's judgment to-day.

CHAPTER V

THE PERFECT MAN

ALTHOUGH we cannot allow art or science to dethrone religion from its pre-eminent place, yet the emphasis put upon these sides of life is useful in compelling religion to take her sovereign power and to reign. It has done much to bring religion into line with her whole duty, which is to put a new sacredness on every sphere of human activity. Culture at its best, and religion, both alike see that the main purpose of life is education in the broadest sense, creating character, letting a man *become*. Life from this high standpoint is the history of a soul in its progress through the world, meeting adventures and experiences, and through them growing to full maturity. The vision of unrealised perfection, which is the deepest thing in both culture and religion, is a tribute to the idealism, which seems imperishable in human nature.

The old and stubbornly fought battle between idealism and realism in art and in life is largely due to confusion of meaning about what the two words at their best stand for. De Quincey said he was

seldom disposed to meet any sincere affirmation by a blank unmodified denial, since all errors arise in some narrow, partial, or angular view of truth; and this is certainly the case in the long quarrel between idealism and realism. They often have to state their side in an extreme form to counterbalance each other's exaggeration. When idealism is looked on as the home of all vagrant visionaries, and sets its seal on every vague romanticism, and every unintelligible speculation, and every vapoury mysticism —all with the one essential qualification of being absolutely unhampered by facts and unrelated to life—it is natural to expect the protest, which impatiently pushes aside the nebulous, the occult in all its forms, all traffic with mystery, all that sounds like rhapsody to the cold ear, all 'striving to attain by shadowing out the unattainable.' The transcendental is dismissed, as either the self-delusion of the dreamer, or the deceit of the charlatan. Realism asks for definiteness of conception, and for precision of statement. It pins us down to the crude, naked fact. It has no sympathy with the inexpressible and the undefinable—if there are such things they can be let alone. Its great virtues are intellectual veracity, and lucid, accurate account of facts. Let us see the thing as it is, and if it has to be described or painted, let it be done as it is seen. This appears a very reasonable demand, and seems to settle the question at once on the side of realism, but the demand which looks so simple only brings the difficulty into focus;

for two men do not see the same scene alike. Art is more than transcription, as realism declares—it is interpretation; but even if it were only transcription, no two men could make the same transcript. Fuseli, painter and art critic, said he only wished he could paint up to what he *saw*. The same thing will appeal differently to different people according to capacity, sensibility, experience. One may look on a flower with the eye of a florist, another of a market-gardener, another of a botanist, another of an artist. William Blake saw angels amid the swaying corn or nestling in a tree. A scene, which is dull and uninteresting to the listless eye, may be transformed by a touch of creative and interpretative imagination, as James Smetham says Gerhard Dow threw a glory over our very pickled cabbage.

Besides, there is an utterance of truth which asks, not for admiration or approval or even intellectual agreement, but for spiritual assent, the thrill of soul which recognises the truth and bends to its dominion. All truth cannot be put into the form of mathematical propositions, which if they are accepted at all must be accepted in the same way, as a straight line must be the same practically to all men however they may prefer to define it. The interpreter of nature or life or the soul of man cannot receive the same immediate and identical response and acceptance as a mathematical proposition requires. He must expect sometimes to meet with blank unintelligence, or with complete misunderstanding, because it is a matter

of inward apprehension, spiritual susceptibility to the impression, and sometimes even moral adjustment to the truth. Strict realism would rule out of court everything which is not, or could not be, completely elaborated in outward expression, and would discount all appeal to feeling and imagination. The protest of realism, which comes at stated intervals, has had a wholesome effect in all forms of art, in insisting on the final reference to reality, by forcing men to relate imagination to life and theory to fact. The true idealism is not found in the baseless visions of a heated imagination. It may have its head in the clouds, but its feet are on the solid ground. The imagination must correspond to the external form in which it is made to manifest itself. The ideal must not be cut off from fact, a castle in the air without foundation in the homely earth: it is the house of life, beautified and adorned as a palace. The ideal is the real seen not merely as it is, but as it should be, as it shall be. It sees the parts, but knows that the parts cannot be put into their proper place without some idea also of the whole. The ideal is the real extended, carried out into its true fruition, the real seen *sub specie æternitatis* and not merely from the point of view of the moment. It is imagination working on the temporal and material, projecting it into the future, and connecting it with the complete round of which it is but a broken arc. It is but an anticipation of results; so that we can say with Browning in *Paracelsus*, that 'he who tastes a crust

of bread tastes all the stars and all the heaven.' The prophets were idealists when they insisted on the relation of religion to history and experience and the whole outward life of man, when they saw it to be the spring of conduct, the source of morality, and that thus in the long-run it fixes destiny for men and nations.

Disillusionment comes when the connection is thought to be too visionary, or at least too distant, to be considered. What we call the real world is so present, so persistent, so palpable to the senses, that the ideal may be easily neglected. The material runs no risk of being overlooked; but the ideal cannot command the same insistent instruments. It works by slower means; it asks to be spiritually discerned; and the world dulls the faculty of seeing that which is invisible. The ideal, however, always reasserts itself sooner or later; for it is an ineradicable element in human nature. Wordsworth in his introduction to his *Ode on Immortality* tells us how impossible it was for him in his youth to disbelieve in the spiritual, because of the immediate sense he had of the indomitableness of the spirit within him. So exalted sometimes was his thought, that he was often unable to think of external things having an external existence at all, which is ever the pitfall of idealism.

'Many times,' he says, 'while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time

I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjection of an opposite character.' The experience is a common one, though not perhaps in the same form, or with the same vividness, yet in some kindred way; and the sceptical mood, which follows in later life and is inclined to limit reality to the material, is also a common one. To the eager soul entranced by the splendour of a great ideal comes a moment of disillusionment, when a cold hand is laid on his pulse, and a curtain seems drawn over his eyes, and sadly he can say—

> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

We see the tragedy being enacted every day in the young man, who began the world with fresh enthusiasm, being subdued to the level of his environment; and worst of all, unlike Wordsworth who deplored the change, sometimes he looks back with shame or even contempt to his first high thoughts. To be sorry that the vision faileth, is a nobler state than to deny that there was a vision at all. When the reality seems so different to the vision, and the lack-lustre eye no longer sees the flaming of the advent feet, the temptation comes to deride the past. This stage of something like disillusionment seems almost inevitable, and should be accepted as part of the discipline of life, as a call not to renounce the ideal but to make it truer and larger. Moral life, the life of tempted beings capable of falling and

rising, of doubting and believing, involves this process, which to so many brings disillusionment at least for a time. It is the great test of life, trying of what stuff it is made; and its full purpose is achieved when a man is sent back to his life with a sweeter, more patient humility.

Idealism, in spite of the disasters that overtake it, is indestructible in man, and the high claim made by many to-day on behalf of culture is but another proof of this. They are attesting to the innate faith of man in his destiny. The ideal, which culture sets before itself of a perfect man—a full-grown, finished, complete man—lies at the heart of the race. A yearning for some unattained perfection is the root of all human progress. Even if it be illusion, even if man be haunted by the dream of a past that has never been, tortured by the vision of a future that will never be, it is only a witness of the truth of the unquenchable thirst of man for the infinite. It is as if he knew that he once dwelt in Eden, and can never quite adjust himself to any other imperfect environment. Is it a memory, as in the thought of the Neo-Platonists to which such beautiful expression has been given by Wordsworth in his great Ode; or is it an anticipation, a prophecy deep in the secret soul of man of a destiny that shall satisfy his every power, a goal he shall yet reach which now he only dimly sees? At any rate it is a fact, *the* fact on which depends all progress in art, and knowledge, and civilisation. The true artist paints with a vision in

his soul of beauty hitherto unrealised ; the thinker investigates and studies, if by any means he may touch the hem of the radiant garment of truth ; man in every branch of human activity is in pursuit of an ideal, reaching forward to things that are before, to apprehend that by which he is apprehended. If we have not a City of God which we seek, we are at least haunted by a city of dream. But for this divine discontent, the race would settle and sink towards a centre of stagnation and death. It is this discontent, born of the sense of weakness, of failure, of imperfection, of sin, which is the spur to all endeavour and the inspiring impulse of life.

> In this broad earth of ours,
> Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
> Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
> Nestles the seed perfection.[1]

Culture, which aims at complete self-realisation and seeks to produce the finest results possible from the human material at its disposal, has as its inciting motive an ideal, however shadowy, of the perfect man. It looks beyond the conflicting details to an end, which will bring into harmony every section of life. In speaking of the possibility of perfection, however, we need to avoid some of the misconceptions which have gathered round the word. In anything which admits of growth, perfection can only be a relative thing, in its kind and according to its degree, as when we speak of a perfect bud, a

[1] Walt Whitman, *Song of the Universal.*

perfect flower, a perfect fruit. That is to say, we can only speak of these things in their particular stage, and in relation to other specimens of their class. Further, even with this it is only popular language, as botanists tell us there never was a perfect flower, except in the arbitrary botanical sense in which a flower is defined as perfect in having both stamens and pistils; but every florist has in his mind an ideal of the perfect flower, towards which he is working to produce. So with man; the qualities that are most attractive in childhood, and later on in boyhood, are not those we look for in manhood. It is no imperfection in the child as such, that he has not the powers and capacities of man. Each kind of created being is imperfect compared with those above them in the scale, and all kinds of created being are imperfect compared with the infinite. Childhood is imperfect as compared with the maturity of manhood, but it has an ideal of its own. Just because man admits of growth, perfection in the absolute sense is impossible; still, as with the florist, though in none of the stages do we find perfection, yet the ideal is there in the heart of the race.

This question of human perfection is further complicated by the complexities of our powers. It is not only that there is growth, but that growth is possible in so many different directions, physical, mental, moral, spiritual. These different spheres need to be put into their proper place and order. In speaking

of a perfect man, we must decide what place to give each function. We need true proportional development, and most of all we need recognition of the element of growth, not only in the individual, but also in the social organism; and growth implies change, a readjustment to the new conditions. This great thought of the change inherent in growth applies to all spheres, whether of knowledge or of social life. Luther said, 'I see something which the blessed Augustine saw not, and those that come after me will see that which I see not'—a confession which was the mark of a great mind. Thus our ideal of the perfect man will include his relations to the social and political life of his time, as well as the steady unfolding of his innate powers to maturity. This social side of a full culture is very often omitted from the æsthetic ideal, and the omission explains most of its failures.

It gets its true place in the Christian ideal, as in the great passage[1] where St. Paul is driving home the duties, which devolve upon Christians as members of the Church, to use all the variety of gifts and graces for mutual edification in the forbearance and tactful spirit of love. The purpose of the varied working, the ideal end, is that all together should come unto a perfect man. He points to the progressive attainment of an ideal. The master-thought of the passage is *growth*, growth in faith and knowledge and love, not only increase in the amount of these,

[1] Eph. iv. 13-16.

but improvement in the quality of them, the deepening and enrichment of their meaning and scope to each. We see this from the very word, which is translated 'perfect.'[1] It means adult, full-grown, and is distinguished from childhood, the period of immaturity. It means manhood, strength, ripeness of character. His argument is that, as the natural life should grow towards fulness of stature and strength, so the spiritual life should grow towards unity of faith and knowledge, and the fulness of Christ. We see the meaning of the word brought out in another passage where St. Paul writes, 'Be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be children, but in understanding be *men*.'[2] The word here translated 'men' is the same word which before was translated 'perfect.' He asks his readers to have the child-nature by being free from all wicked thought and deed, and in that respect to be children; but in intellect and judgment to be men, grown up, of full age. So in the previous passage from Ephesians the state of unity of faith and knowledge is looked on as full maturity, manhood as opposed to the immature period of childhood. St. Paul looks forward to this maturity for the whole Church—looks forward, that is, to progressive Christian development. There are degrees of perfection, stages of growth,

[1] τέλειος (*a*) complete, full, as in Mat. v. 48. ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι = complete (in love), not exclusive, but all-embracing. (*b*) adult. And used as metaphor = full-grown in mind and understanding.

[2] 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

from childhood to the maturity of manhood, 'till we all come into a full-grown, a perfect man . . . that we may be no longer children . . . but may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, even Christ.'

This magnificent ideal of the Apostle makes us think of the Greek conception, seen at its best in Plato. His ideal is the absolutely fit man, of developed physical form, disciplined in mind and in character, perfectly poised in his complete nature, each part adjusted to the whole. The word *balanced* expresses the thought perhaps best of any single word. Moral beauty was implied as well as physical, and with a thinker like Plato nobility of soul took the first place, though, like the Greek he was, beauty of all sorts attracted him; and what he asked for was a due proportion of all the different spheres. The Greek did not think, like the Hebrew, of holiness as such. The good and the beautiful made up one idea to him, barely separable. The way the two words good and beautiful were combined into one word,[1] as if they just implied sides of the same thing, shows this. There is a deep truth in this combination of the two ideas, but the danger which lurked in it, when looked at from the side which appealed naturally to the Greek temperament, was indeed that before which the Greek race succumbed. When the fine instinct was blunted, mere pleasure of the senses became the end; and with the decay of the good came the loss of the beautiful also.

[1] καλοκάγαθός.

Still, we must not forget that Plato's ideal was a spiritual one, and not a mere æsthetic one, though the stress was laid on beauty. In his thought the lover of beauty is led on and up to the region of spirit, if he is true to his pure love of the beautiful. In words which must ever remain the finest expression of the quest after the beatific vision of perfect beauty, Plato describes how the Sophron, the man of sound mind, who follows reason, and restrains passion, and loves the beautiful, is led to the goal,—'He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes to the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty —a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing, or decaying, or waxing, or waning; which is in the next place not fair in one point of view, and foul in another . . . but Beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which, without diminution, or increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of other things. He who, under the influence of true love rising upward from these things, begins to see that Beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going or being is to use the beauties of earth as steps, along which one mounts upwards for the sake of that other Beauty; going to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair thoughts, until from fair thoughts he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty. . . .

What if man had eyes to see the true Beauty, the Divine beauty I mean, pure, and clear, and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and the colours and vanities of human life?'[1] Then he goes on to show how a man holding communion with that divine beauty brings forth and nourishes true virtue, and becomes the friend of God, if mortal man may. It is thus not a mere æsthetic ideal, but a spiritual one, which Plato puts before us for the perfect man; though he states the ideal in terms of beauty, rather than in terms of holiness. A man, in his progress towards this perfection, is to rise from the visible beauty of earth to the eternal beauty behind the concrete manifestations, and through his spiritual converse is to reach harmonious moral life.

St. Paul, in his great statement of the Christian ideal to which we have referred, suggests the same thought of growth towards a completeness and balance of power. It is the beauty of holiness which entrances him, also rising upward from the earth, mounting step by step till it comes at last to the wondrous realisation in Christ Jesus. It is an ascending scale of knowledge, and truth, and goodness, and faith, and love; till the perfect, the complete man is reached. With him it is, in addition, a social development, each contributing to the good of the whole, and all simultaneously arriving, through social discipline, at the goal. In St. Paul's thought,

[1] Jowett's 'Plato'—*Symposium.*

therefore, the Christian life should not only be progressive in the ordinary sense, with ever new insight, and ever fuller communion, and ever fresh discovery of the divine resources for life, but should also be a service of love, wherein the whole Christian community finds organic development. We have already seen how many of the mistakes of culture, as it is commonly understood, arise from the neglect of this aspect. The passion for perfection, which we have seen is inherent in man, the human quest after the ideal, the vision of a perfect state for the individual and for the society, find full expression in the Christian faith; and the emphasis is laid, where it must be laid to satisfy us, on the spiritual.

The emphasis must be so laid on the spiritual, if it is to satisfy our sense of the fitness of things, even in the individual desire for a complete life. We just need to look at our innate conception of the perfect man to assure us of this. If we were asked to draw a picture of the perfect man, what would we consider the most important things? We would at once agree, for example, that a man might have the physical development and the beauty of an Adonis, and yet if he had an undeveloped mind, he would not be a man in the sense that we mean man. Also, a man might have a cultured mind, enriched by the poetry, and art, and learning of the ages, with fine discriminating taste for style, and with capacity for profound thinking, but if his moral nature be rudimentary, his great gifts of brain alone could not

put him into our highest class. Further, he might even have a truly cultured conscience, and would yet fall short of a complete man, if the spiritual side of his nature be neglected. This scale of judgment is the instinctive creed of mankind. Apart from all questions of origin, and all scientific theories, we classify men in history and in life according to this standard of values. From the animal to the intellectual, from the intellectual to the moral, from the moral to the spiritual, is the inevitable appeal, as from a lower to a higher court. Whatever be our theory of the origin of mind, or of conscience, or of religion, we feel each step to be an advance. According to temperament and the particular sphere which interests us most, or where our special work lies, we will think one of the particular steps the most important, either the step from the animal to the intellectual, or the step from intellect to moral life, or from the moral to the spiritual; but the order, and succession, and relative position of the different stages will remain.

Even the philosophy which makes happiness the end of life, and which dismisses both conscience and soul from the seat of authority, makes distinctions in the quality of the happiness, and tries to safeguard the philosophy, and at the same time to safeguard life, by showing how much better and more lasting the higher pleasures are than the lower ones. John Stuart Mill gave a certain nobility to the theory that happiness is our being's end and aim, by admit-

ting grades of pleasure, and by trying to show that a man who knew the higher pleasure would not willingly give it up for a lower; though at the same time Mill was destroying the very principles on which his philosophy was based. 'It is an unquestionable fact,' he says in noble language, 'that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both, do give a marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would consent to be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs. They would not resign what they possess more than he, for the most complete satisfaction of all the desires which they have in common with him. If they ever fancy they would, it is only in cases of unhappiness so extreme, that to escape from it they would exchange their lot for almost any other, however undesirable in their own eyes. A being of high faculties requires more to make him happy, is capable probably of more acute suffering, and is certainly accessible to it at more points than one of an inferior type; but in spite of these liabilities he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to

be a lower grade of existence.'[1] All this is true, but for other reasons than because the higher faculties give greater pleasure; and it may be confidently affirmed that on Utilitarian principles man would never have come to the higher faculties at all, would never have possessed the intellect, and feeling, and conscience, which can afford so much satisfaction.

We are not concerned in our present connection with any criticism of Mill's fundamental position that pleasure is the end of life; we are only concerned with the admission that, even from that position, pleasures offer a distinction in *quality*, and that therefore man ought to seek satisfaction in the higher activities of his nature. Every one practically recognises this distinction, that our estimation of a life, even from the point of view of its happiness, must take into account the quality of the pleasures, as well as the quantity. Every one agrees that the pleasures of a sot cannot be compared with the pleasures of a philosopher; as Heraclitus said, a donkey would prefer hay to gold, since fodder gives more pleasure to a donkey than any amount of gold could. The distinction which Mill admits, is one accepted by most philosophers of whatever school from the time of Aristotle, who very justly made the distinction a criticism of the theory that pleasure is the chief end of life, since, as a matter of fact, we would choose some of these higher activities, even if no pleasure resulted from them. The passage from

[1] *Utilitarianism*, p. 12.

Mill which we have quoted is a very eloquent extension of Aristotle's contention,[1] that no one would choose to live on condition of having a child's intellect all his life, though he were to enjoy in the highest possible degree all the pleasures of a child; nor choose to gain enjoyment by the performance of some extremely disgraceful act, though he were never to feel pain. The truth is that we do consider the higher faculties as intrinsically more valuable, especially when we find as a further fact of practical life that a calculating pursuit of pleasure defeats itself. It is the paradox of life that the way to miss pleasure is to seek it first. The very first condition of lasting happiness is that a life should be full of purpose, aiming at something outside self. As a matter of experience, we find that true happiness comes in seeking other things, in the manifold activities of life, in the healthful outgoing of all human powers.

We thus come, by another road, back to our position that the ideal of a perfect man must not only include the development of the higher faculties, but must lay the stress on these, must rise in a *crescendo* from sense to mind, from mind to the moral, from the moral to the spiritual. As in the other spheres, we are forced to make a distinction between morality and spirituality. They are connected; they influence each other; but they are not identical. Some men, whose lives are governed by

[1] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. x.

moral principles, are not, so far as we can see, spiritually-minded men: and, on the other hand, some truly religious men have not as enlightened consciences as they should have, and as we hope they will have before they die. The two spheres are as distinct as mind and body, and as closely related. The bodily state affects the mind, and mental conditions can affect physical health. So the spiritual man cannot be essentially an immoral man; for, if he were, he would kill his spiritual life. And the moral man will find that he cannot become even the best of his kind, unless his morality be vitalised by spirit. We see the same distinction brought out in the different way in which men look upon themselves; and here also we see why sincere heart-religion is necessary to our thought of a perfect man, even in the interests of true morality. A man who never looks within, who regulates his conduct by accepted rules, may be very complacent, and be fairly satisfied with his attainments. He does not feel the inward pressure of soul towards a higher perfection. He may be in all things of exemplary life, and naturally does not see what more can be asked of him. He does not hunger and thirst after righteousness, and knows nothing of the passion of the saints, who speak in a foreign tongue to him. He has neither the depths nor the heights of a man who is God-possessed. Such an one, stung to madness, it may be, by a sense of sin, allured by the vision of holiness, is in the grip of powers unknown

to the other; and yet he may be, nay is, the more truly human, for his soul has waked, and moved, and grows.

If the spiritual side of a man's nature be undeveloped, he is not truly *full-grown.* Since the ideal is a complete development, full culture must mean that no part of the being of man will be overlooked, and to leave out the spiritual is like *Hamlet* with the part of the Prince of Denmark left out. It makes no difference to the argument, whether we call the spiritual qualities only the finer attributes of mind or not. If the ideal implies spiritual communion with the divine (as it does both in St. Paul's thought and in Plato's), a man without it remains a case of arrested development, with shrunken soul, never reaching complete manhood, never attaining the true balance and fulness of life.

Thus, if we carry culture as a theory of life far enough up, and if in accordance with the facts of human nature we accept the duty implied in the possession of spiritual capacity, we are led to the religious position. It is inconsistent and illogical, to say the least, to cover all the lower reaches of life with a scheme of culture, and then to stop short, and deny the higher demands, and refuse the consequences of the very scheme itself. If we accept the facts of the moral life, if we accept the testimony of history and experience as to the spiritual possibilities of man, we will be forced to admit the regal claims of religion. Once we admit the facts of spiritual

experience, whatever be our theory of their explanation, duty regarding them emerges. It means that we should take seriously this side of our nature, which indeed makes us men in the true sense, able to live in the power of an endless life, with capacities that reach out to the unseen and eternal. So that, beginning with culture and consistently applying it, we come to religious duty.

And, on the other hand, beginning with religion, we will be led to as wide a scheme of culture as is possible—indeed such a scheme gets a new sanction, for it becomes a religious duty. Religion, too, will save culture from its mistakes and the defects of its quality will save it from barrenness and selfish preoccupation. But just because of the sovereign place of the soul, religion will make a man put first things first, and will show him that character must come before accomplishments, and the graces of the spirit before graces of the mind. Still, religion accepted in its widest scope will be the inspiring power for every region of life, setting its seal of consecration on all human powers. It should radiate out as from a centre of light and heat, giving energy and vitality to every sphere. It is because the spiritual in us is so overborne, so overweighted by the animal, that we need to be continually recalled to the ideal of the perfect man. The soul may be said to be in abeyance in us, in a state of suspended animation, when, indeed, it is not in immediate danger of being asphyxiated for want of air; and so we need the

reminder, which every form of idealism brings, of the imperious claims of soul.

If then a man is to develop the higher spiritual faculties, he must not cling stubbornly to the organs of knowledge suitable to lower spheres. When St. Paul wrote, 'Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,'[1] his argument is that there is a special organ of faith, or rather a spiritual sense, what may be called the religious faculty, which a man must have before he can have anything to say about the things of the soul. They are to be discerned and judged, not by the exercise of thought and reason, not by speculation and theory, but by spiritual enlightenment, by inward revelation; because religion at its deepest means the consciousness of contact with spirit. Religion, therefore, is not philosophy to be built up and logicated about, but inspiration to be immediately felt and seen; not something at second-hand, but something discernible by the receptive heart. It follows, as St. Paul goes on to show, that neither the spiritual man nor spiritual things can be judged by the carnal mind. His judgment is vitiated by having no criterion within himself, so that he could not know spiritual things if he saw them; he could not recognise them, for they do not *find* him, to use Coleridge's word

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

with which he expressed the self-evidencing power of Christian truth. 'The man in the street' has nothing to say to religious truth, which needs a prepared and sympathetic spirit. This is unpalatable doctrine, for to-day the man in the street claims to be the final judge of all things. But unpalatable or not, it is true doctrine: we cannot go to him to settle the great questions of religion, any more than a scientific man would go to him with any fresh scientific discovery he may imagine he has made: he wants the approval and assent of the authorities on his subject, the specialists in his branch of science. So in religion, the man in the street is out of court, incompetent to judge, as the colour-blind is to test colours, or the unmusical to pronounce verdict on a symphony.

Thus, this principle of St. Paul's is not an isolated one, applicable only in a mysterious sphere called religion; it runs right through life in every region —the things of sense are discerned by sense, the things of intellect are discerned by intellect, the things of spirit are discerned by spirit. There is nothing exclusive about this law, though it excludes. If a man is out of court in spiritual matters, it is not because of some mechanical arbitrary decision that disfranchises him. Just as an animal that lives a purely animal existence cannot enter into the thoughts and reasonings of a man, though the animal can see, and hear, and feel, and enjoy, and lives a sentient life as truly as the man does; so the carnal

mind cannot enter into the higher reaches of spirit, though it can reason and think. As intellect is on a different range of things from sense, so the spiritual is on a different range of things from intellect. It uses the same powers of reason, and conscience, and will, but these powers energised by spirit. There are analogies in other spheres of the same distinction. The poet, for instance, does not come to conclusions as the logician does; he possesses the penetrative imagination, which sees truth by instinct, so that where another limps he soars, and hears the angel's song, and sees the shining of the glory.

It is not a law of deprivation imposed on some men from the outside, but a law of affinity, by which like is attracted by like. 'Among men,' St. Paul asks, 'who knoweth the things of the man except the spirit of the man that is in him?'[1] Similarly, there is a region of inner personal relationship with God, of consciousness of God, in which a man can enter into the things of God, can, when touched by the life-giving Spirit, see and believe and humbly accept the wondrous vision of love and mercy and forgiving grace. So that what may seem foolishness to some may be the very essence of wisdom; and what may be beyond knowledge, outside the bounds of experience of some, may be a first principle of the religious man, because these things are spiritually discerned. The implication of this is that ordinary methods of investigation, and ordinary

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

tests of evidence and ordinary means of knowledge, are beyond the mark when they seek to limit the soul of man. To insist on everything being brought within the control of scientific evidence, is to cut off from life more than most people imagine, and to limit the sphere of man's powers and interests to a very narrow one indeed. The organ of spiritual discernment is faith, and faith is not just a blind plunge into the unknown, but is a testing of the alleged spiritual facts, in itself as reasonable a process as any other testing of facts. Intellectual truth asks for intellectual verification: spiritual truth asks for spiritual verification; and the one demand is as reasonable as the other. Huxley in his *Lay Sermons* says that faith has been proved a cardinal sin by science, which is true about credulity and superstition, where science has done nothing but good; but Romanes[1] shows that in this statement Huxley falls into the common error of identifying faith with opinion; and with just cause he adds, 'What a terrible hell science would have made of the world, if she had abolished the spirit of faith even in human relations.'

There is a region of life which lies beyond the reasoning faculty, a point of contact between the human soul and the unseen universe, giving a possible intercourse between our spirit and the divine. It may appear foolishness to the man who insists on examining it by the ordinary critical

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 141.

instruments. Life is beyond criticism, which can only touch the fringe, can only work on the forms in which life manifests itself. The methods and manner of appearing of life can be investigated, but life itself is inscrutable; it evades the microscope and the test-tube. And what is true of life is true of spiritual life, which is independent of criticism. There are things which baffle analysis, the mysteries which are only made more mysterious by all our increase of knowledge. There are things which pass knowledge, and yet are known; and until we come to this humbly, we are shutting ourselves out from a world of beauty, and truth, and love, into which we ought to have inlet, and we are wilfully impoverishing our life. Demonstration is a different thing from conviction. We might demonstrate till doomsday that men are sinners, but that does not mean conviction of sin as it is meant in religion. We might prove the existence of God by abstract reasoning, but that is another thing from the consciousness of God, the knowledge of God, which must be a spiritual experience if it is to be anything. A recognition of this puts criticism in its right place at once: it must stand at the Templegate or the outer Court, it has no entry to the Holy of Holies. Criticism cannot even paint a picture, and if it makes us look upon a picture as something merely to be pulled to pieces and analysed, it may keep us from being able to enjoy a picture. We must refuse to be jockeyed out of our larger

life, and to be dislodged from what we know to be facts of spiritual experience, as truly facts as any of observation. We must assert the supremacy of the soul. Some have in the interests of the soul denied and starved the body, or the mind, or both; but it is a nobler error than to deny and starve the soul in the interests of body or mind.

> The old false teachers, who at first seemed hard
> To nature—bidding, Crucify the flesh
> To save the soul,—were merciful to these;
> For these would crucify the soul itself,
> And stifle back upon itself the cry,
> And deepest craving of the human heart,
> The unutterable thirst of man for God.[1]

The demand of a complete culture, which would be true to its own principles, is for proportional development. It should leave no part of the being of man out of its scheme, and should aim at a complete balance and poise of nature, a full-orbed life in the fullest sense. While it concedes the duty of developing the physical powers, it asks emphatically for mental growth; and there it does not confine its attention to one side of intellect, but recognises the place of imagination and the finer sensibilities that make the poet and the artist. It also sees the important function of the emotions in the life of man, and therefore must give room for culture of the heart; for as John Selden says, 'The difference of men is very great (you would

[1] Mrs. Hamilton King, 'The Disciples'—*Ugo Bassi*.

scarce think them to be of the same species) and yet it consists more in the affections than in the intellect.'[1] Nothing is deeper and stronger in man than the feelings, and any selfish scheme of culture condemns itself, by omitting scope for the play of the tender sentiments, that indeed bind society together, and make any kind of culture possible at all.

Further, there is the region of morals, the need of an enlightened conscience and a disciplined will. This culture of character must take precedence of the finest culture of mind. Not even an exquisite taste for the fine arts and an infallible judgment of literature can make up for a life that is undeveloped in other lines. Such æsthetic attainment cannot save a life from failure, when there is at the back of it a weak character. Charles I. was a man of taste and imagination and even intellect, with great knowledge of art, and a genuine love of literature. His collection of paintings was admired throughout Europe for the fine taste displayed in the selection. When a captive awaiting judgment, he devoted hours daily not only to Bishop Andrewes, and Hooker's great book, but to Tasso, Ariosto, Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, and Shakespeare. Yet he was of flighty, and confused, and perverse brain, and was anything but a wise king. He never seemed able to accept facts, to say nothing of being able even dimly to read the signs of the times, and staggered on to his doom blindly and stupidly.

[1] *Table Talk.*

Finally, the perfect man must have a life above sense and time, rising, as in Plato's ideal, from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair thoughts, and from fair thoughts till he touches the infinite region of spirit. Without this higher culture, life must remain one-sided and disproportionate, without the depth and richness of a complete nature. Thus, step by step we have risen to the insistent demand of religion, which claims to cover all the ground, consecrating every power and capacity, that they may be used for a higher purpose than even their own best perfection. Religion admits the truth and the duty involved in the æsthetic ideal, but transcends that truth with a higher truth, and includes that duty in a wider duty still. What that is we will seek to discover in the Christian Solution, after we have considered the rival method which opposes self-culture by self-restraint.

CHAPTER VI

THE ASCETIC IDEAL—RESTRAINT

In opposition to the theory of the natural cultivation of all human powers, the world has ever had presented to it the rival theory, which works by a rigorous method of self-repression. It bases itself on the universal experience of the necessity for self-denial and strict self-control. All the great teachers of the world are agreed in protesting against the dominion of appetite in the life of man. The sort of life which naturally appeals to man cannot have full sway unhindered. Progress in reform, in legislation, in social conditions, as well as in the personal life, is founded on this necessity. The moral life of man is possible, because he is able to refuse present gratification for the sake of some larger good, is able to postpone even clamant pleasure in view of some end he sets before him. Self-control is the first lesson of life. The quarrel which moralists have ever had with what they call the worldly life, is just that it is blind to results, that it prefers the present to the future, and refuses to make any sacrifice of present good for the sake of larger future good. It

has not patience, which is another name for self-control. The worldly man for a bird in the hand, says Bunyan. It is a marginal note which he appends to a scene in the Interpreter's House. 'I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and had him into a little room where sat two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, and the name of the other Patience. Passion seemed to be much discontented; but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, What is the reason of the discontent of Passion? The Interpreter answered, The Governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now; but Patience is willing to wait. Then I saw that one came to Passion, and brought him a bag of treasure, and poured it down at his feet, the which he took up and rejoiced therein, and withal laughed Patience to scorn. But I beheld but a while, and he had lavished all away, and had nothing left him but rags.' The Interpreter expounds the matter by making Passion a figure of the men of this world, and Patience a figure of the men of that which is to come. It is Bunyan's inimitably graphic way of drawing a distinction, which all moralists make in some form or other.

The duty of self-control is further enforced, not merely as a choice between two possible good courses, the better of which is got through patience, but also because of the actual existence of evil.

The existence of evil is a fact of experience, whether we look within or without; and men are face to face with the practical problem how they are to deal with it, quite apart from any theories about the origin of evil, and the essential nature of evil, or any possible explanation of its meaning. The different philosophical theories on these points do affect the particular plan of life adopted by different men, as we saw when dealing with culture as a religion, and as we will further see in considering the conception of evil which underlies asceticism, but apart from any reference to such theories, the mere fact of acknowledged evil creates the practical difficulty as to its treatment. It will not be ignored for long, as so many æsthetic schemes ignore it; and it is at least the merit of the ascetic ideal that it unflinchingly faces the problem. Its practical treatment of the fact of evil is a demand from men for the renunciation of personal gratifications that minister to evil; and since it sees that the spiritual faculties must be cultivated to some extent at the expense of the animal instincts, it advocates even abstinence from lawful pleasures, and constant restraint of natural tastes and propensities. The next step is a simple one, the denial that what we call the blessings of life are good in themselves, even the deliberate judgment that ordinary human life militates against the higher instincts of the soul; till the ideal becomes a mutilation of all natural desires, and the cramping of all human powers. It accepts with

calm decision what George Meredith calls the lesson of the flesh—

> The lesson writ in red since first Time ran
> A hunter hunting down the beast in man;
> That till the chasing out of its last vice,
> The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.[1]

We will never make anything of the great problem represented by the antithesis of Culture and Restraint, till we accept the facts on both sides; and, as we acknowledged the legitimate claims of culture, we must recognise that the ascetic scheme is not just a form of insanity, a blind fanaticism with no solid groundwork of fact. It springs from facts and forces, which have their ultimate seat in the nature of man. It may overstep the work of the necessary discipline required to keep the body in subjection, but it at least honours human nature by demanding the ascendency of the higher instincts over the lower. The heart of man has ever acknowledged the grandeur of this view, inspired as it is with a deep sense of the solemnity of human life. Even the monastic system, which is so much discredited in modern thought, was a noble attempt on a magnificent scale to purify the flesh of its grossness, and to lift life to a higher level. It was the expression of the need of discipline, and of the deep thought of life as a vocation. To the first instinctive method of the world it opposed the method, which chooses poverty instead of riches, humility

[1] Ode, *France*.

and resignation of will instead of the pride of life.

The ascetic ideal also gets much of its force from the failure of the rival method for a satisfied life, which has been for ages judged and for ages found wanting. It points to the testimony of *blasé* worldlings, who preach by their very faces the vanity of vanities, the world-weariness of the world's votaries. It has learned the truth of the strange paradox that the most certain method of losing happiness is to seek it, and from that palpable failure it feels justified in seeking to 'crush that ever-craving lust for bliss, which kills all bliss.' So that when the natural theory has had full sway in any period of history, bringing its inevitable heart-sickness, we find a reaction towards a stricter manner of living. The great movements towards ascetic practices, which we see in history, are not chance phenomena, but are related to eternal facts in man's life. As John Morley says of the Puritanism of Cromwell's time, 'Puritanism came from the deeps. It was like Stoicism, Monasticism, Jansenism, even Mohammedanism, a manifestation of elements in human nature which are indestructible. It flowed from yearnings that make themselves felt in Eastern world and Western; it sprang from aspirations that breathe in men and women of many communions and faiths; it arose in instincts that seldom conquer for more than a brief season, and yet are never crushed. An ascetic and unworldly

way of thinking about life, a rigorous moral strictness, the subjugation of sense and appetite, a coldness to every element in worship and ordinance external to the believer's own soul, a dogma unyielding as cast-iron—all these things satisfy moods and sensibilities in man that are often silent and fleeting, are easily drowned in reaction, but are readily responsive to the awakening voice.'[1]

It has to be noted that the finest religious and ethical systems of the pre-Christian ages resulted in forms of ascetic creed and practice, which were carried much further than these have ever been in the Christian Church. The asceticism of early Indian religion has been perhaps the most thoroughgoing mortification of the flesh ever tried by man. In fact the consistent logical position of asceticism is only found in Brahminism, which associated evil not only with the body of man but with everything finite, so that the ideal became the complete absorption of all individual life. Life was inherently evil; but their doctrine of transmigration made it impossible to escape from the evil by ruthlessly cutting the cord. That would be only to prolong the agony, and the more effectually to enmesh the soul in evil. The only way for a man to escape from his fatal heritage was to suppress at its source the fountain of desire, from which life, and therefore evil, flows. The very soul itself had to die, by choking off its innate activities. The soul was to be

[1] Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, p. 47.

liberated from its deadly prison by attenuating the link between it and existence as much as possible. The aim was the extinction of desire, an impassive state, where the natural appetites, and even the natural affections, were reduced to a minimum.

Stoicism, which was the only Greek or Roman philosophy that from its moral earnestness could be at all a rival of Christianity, had for its ideal a similar impassive calm. Starting from a different source, and traversing different ground, it yet came to a somewhat similar end as Buddhism. The Stoic ideal was *passionlessness*,[1] a self-contained state, in which the natural impulses were to be crushed, not merely chastened into conformity with a higher law, and the social affections were to be rooted out, not guided and guarded from abuse. Two such great tendencies as these could not converge to one point, in such dissimilar conditions as India and Greece or Rome afforded, without being expressive of facts of life.

Huxley even goes the length of drawing from this the moral that modern thought about the ethical state of man tends to move towards something like the same result. He makes short work of those who think that ethical evolution goes along the lines of the cosmic evolution. He holds that moral development must be by different means from those which furthered physical development, not by such principles as the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest,

[1] ἀπάθεια—implying the suppression of desire, as far as possible.

but by the restraint and overturning of these principles. Men in society are subject to the cosmic process, by which the strongest, the most self-assertive, tend to tread down the weaker; but moral advance can only be by restraining those instincts, and by struggling against the natural tendency. 'Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest in respect of the whole of the conditions which exist, but of those who are ethically the best.'[1] The practice of goodness or virtue, he asserts, involves a course of conduct, which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the ordinary struggle for existence, and in place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint.

It is a new scientific statement of an ascetic ideal, which man must have if he will have moral progress. The ethical progress of society in Huxley's judgment depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, but in combating it; and he thinks we have ground for a certain measure of success in thus subduing nature to man's highest ends. He foresees that we shall have to count upon reckoning with a tenacious and powerful enemy as long as the world lasts, but on the other hand he sees no limit to the extent in which true success may be achieved. 'Much may be done to change the nature of man himself. The intelligence

[1] *Evolution and Ethics* (the Romanes Lecture, 1893), p. 33.

which has converted the brother of the wolf into the faithful guardian of the flock, ought to be able to do something towards curbing the instincts of savagery in civilised men.'[1] He calls on us in strong virile tone to play the man, to attempt some work of noble note, to cherish the good that falls in our way, to bear the evil in and around us with stout hearts, striving ever to diminish it. There could not be a more succinct statement of some aspects of the ascetic ideal, such aspects for example as that ethical nature has to struggle with a tenacious and powerful enemy, has to use self-restraint in place of any form of self-assertion, and has to oppose the cosmic process at every step. It cuts the ground from Huxley's own philosophical position of agnosticism; since he does not explain why we should so run against nature and the great cosmic process, which has evolved man from the animal; but it stands to Huxley's credit as a courageous man, who accepted the facts of moral life, as he accepted facts in scientific observation. It does credit also to his large-hearted and noble thought about duty, that he should push the facts of moral life to their conclusion, in summoning men to the great moral task, to be

> strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

The ascetic ideal, when rigidly pursued, has again and again resulted in various forms of self-torture,

[1] *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 36.

and mutilation, and withdrawal from the world. Many of these forms found a home in the Christian Church: solitary anchorites like the hermits of Egypt; pillar-saints like St. Simeon Stylites; flagellants like Anthony of Padua, who lashed themselves in public, singing penitential Psalms: and the great Monastic system generally, which ultimately spread throughout the whole of Christendom. In the next chapter we will trace the origin and growth of Asceticism in the Christian Church; but we would not be doing anything like justice to their attitude, if we left it as if their sole motive was an intense desire to keep themselves unspotted from the world, and to avoid temptation. There were two deeper objects in their attempts at complete severance from the world's evil.

One was to reduce the rebellious flesh to subjection to a higher law of holiness. They were on fire with the passion for purity, and shrank from no sacrifice which they thought would further it. They knew, as all men discover, that it is easier to reform opinions than to reform habits, and to change their creed than to change their life. They were set upon the harder task, only spurred on the keener by the difficulty. They would tear up evil from their nature by the roots, and enter the Kingdom maimed if need be, with honourable scars of conflict, like the soldier's mutilated limb, a royal seal signal of service. It became in later times a formal method, and even a fashion, but the great ascetics were moved by the

profound longing to have done altogether with sin, and to attain moral purity.

The other object was the ambition to penetrate the secrets of the celestial light, to devote themselves to divine contemplation that they might enter into a fuller spiritual communion. 'What is the reason,' asks Thomas À Kempis, 'why some of the Saints were so perfect and contemplative? Because they laboured to mortify themselves wholly to all earthly desires; and therefore they could with their whole heart fix themselves upon God, and be free for holy retirement.'[1] It was held that the heavenly vision could be experienced only through the practice of rigorous mortification, interdicting themselves from all gratification, making themselves pure channels, so to speak, of heavenly grace. This ideal of spiritual intuition to be reached through moral purity represents an eternal fact, which is verified in every religious experience. Whether the ascetic method succeeds best, or even at all, in attaining moral purity, is not at present our point. Granting their premise that it was a method, it was a true instinct which assured them that they would therefore enter into a deeper religious communion. This desire for God, to taste the joys of divine fellowship, to be emptied of self and filled with the light of God's presence, was the inspiring motive. We cannot do justice to this phase of religious life, unless we see in it more than mere protest against evil in the world, but also a

[1] *Imitatio Christi*, Bk. I. ch. xi.

passionate desire to enter into divine mysteries. When they cut themselves off from the clogs and distractions of earth, in order to give themselves up to holy meditation, their ultimate purpose was spiritual exaltation. Tennyson with great insight expresses this longing in his study of St. Simeon Stylites, who is made to describe his terrible sufferings voluntarily endured, as he lay with his right leg chained into the crag, before he changed it for his even more uncomfortable posture on the pillar; and in his description he reveals what led him to seek such hardships.

> Three winters, *that my soul might grow to Thee*,
> I lived up there on yonder mountain side.

The object of the ascetic was, not merely to procure the dominion of the good over the bad by the rigid practice of self-denial, but thereby to use what was believed to be the approved method of entering into communion with God.

We need not at this point discuss the many grades of asceticism, and the different shades of motive which occasioned the discipline, from the extravagances of anchorites, to the little acts of self-sacrifice of daily life which keep human life sweet. We will consider the truth at the bottom of all asceticism, the necessity for self-denial, and its ethical value. The very word asceticism[1] shows from its derivation the truth, which underlies even the extravagances which the

[1] ἄσκησις.

name now suggests. In ancient Greece, the word meant the discipline undergone by athletes in the course of their training; and quite naturally the word was taken over into Stoic philosophy, to mean the discipline needed in the practice of virtue in controlling the appetites and passions. In the Christian Church it had at first the same meaning, the exercise of abstinence and of restraint as religious means; and then it came to denote the attempt to attain holiness by self-mortification, by the practice of all manner of bodily austerities, and by generally starving out the evil nature in man. It was originally discipline, which began as simplicity of living, the voluntary surrender of ordinary comforts and possessions. The root principle is the moral obligation which demands that a man must have his nature under the curb, since, as Stoic morality held, he who rules not himself is a slave. Gradually, asceticism came to look upon self-mortification as a good in itself, not merely as a means towards something which was considered worth the sacrifice; but the thought was never quite lost, that the ascetic exercises were to induce spiritual results. The common means were fasting, celibacy, solitude, refusing to participate in the ordinary relationships and the ordinary business of the world, inflicting various sorts of penance; and ultimately this attitude to life led to monasticism, as it was known in the mediæval Church. The great truth in all ascetic schemes lies on the surface, namely, that as the Greek athlete

submitted to his '*askesis*,' the training which would produce the best results, so there is needed for man self-control, discipline, to make the best of his powers.

The word was quite naturally acclimatised in Christian thought, though the word itself only appears once in the New Testament, where it is used as a verb[1] in the general sense of exercising or working on oneself as an artificer does on his material. But other references to the Greek athletes are common, as in such a phrase as 'Every man that *striveth for the mastery* is temperate in all things,'[2] where St. Paul uses an illustration, which was well-known to his readers, taken from the races of the Isthmian games. His Corinthian readers knew about the training of the runners, and how candidates had to submit themselves to strict discipline, a chief element of which was a carefully regulated temperance. Epictetus gives some of the rules of Greek athletic training, which hold good to some extent in the most scientific physical training to-day —that a competitor must be regular and orderly in all his habits, must abstain from wine and confections, must not eat at random, and must exercise at the appointed time in heat or cold, and in all things must give himself up entirely to his training master. The object of the athletic 'askesis' was to produce the best possible results for the body, which was so rigidly exercised; and this also is the first object

[1] Acts xxiv. 16, 'Herein do I *exercise* myself.'
[2] 1 Cor. ix. 25—ὁ ἀγωνιξόμενος.

designed, when the idea is brought into the mental or moral sphere. That is to say, that for the sake of these powers themselves, to give them strength and perfection of nature, self-denial is required.

Thus we come to the first point, where the two opposing ideals meet, and where we have a hint of a possible synthesis, that restraint is needed in the very interests of culture. This was well understood in the best ethics of Greece. In Plato and Aristotle it is laid down that man must acquire the habit of self-mastery, if he is to live truly. Without such restraint, proportion and harmony in life, and therefore beauty also, would be lost. Until a man has learned to avoid excess, he is throwing away all chance of real happiness, and is meanwhile ruining his best faculties. There can be no true culture without self-denial. The doctrine of moderation springs directly from Greek philosophy. A warning against excess was usual even in the Epicurean philosophy, as excess would inevitably ruin the end aimed at, happiness. Quite apart from the question of happiness and pleasure, the good or virtue or moral excellence, in typical Greek thinking, lay in avoiding extremes. It might be called the very central thought of Aristotle's Ethics that virtue is moderation, not of course meaning moderation in indulging in anything wrong, but that wrong itself means either excess or deficiency. He defines virtue as a habit or trained faculty of choice, the characteristic of which lies in observing the mean. 'And it is

a moderation, firstly, inasmuch as it comes in the middle or mean between two vices, one on the side of excess, the other on the side of defect; and secondly, inasmuch as, while these vices fall short of, or exceed, the due measure in feeling and in action, it finds and chooses the mean, or moderate amount.'[1] This is a true principle of ethics, as can be seen in almost every region of conduct. Take the matter of giving money: virtue or moderation would be liberality; the two corresponding vices would be excess, which is prodigality, and deficiency, which is meanness. Even in details of life like pleasant amusing conversation, Aristotle would call wit or humour moderation, undue excess of which would be buffoonery, and undue deficiency, as of a man who frowned gloomily on every innocent jest, would be boorishness. This great principle of the mean is in keeping with the whole Greek ideal of culture, as the harmonious development of every part, without one-sidedness.

In every art in its highest flights there must be moderation, the recognition of the limits within which it must move. Exaggeration ruins effect. It is this restraint which gives great art of any kind its appearance of simplicity, a mastery which deceives by its apparent ease. Excess or defect each mean failure. In speech or writing, where emotions are worked on, unrestrained violence, which overleaps the modesty of nature, misses the mark aimed at—

[1] *Nicomachean Ethics*, II. 6, 16.

as desperate unregulated vehemence in an orator only creates shame or amusement in his audience. On the other hand, force without exaggeration, power without noise, the dexterous ease of execution which hides all traces of effort, never fail of effect. This means always some form of self-limitation, moderation, the practice of restraint. Thus culture implies restraint in every sphere where cultivation is applied; and restraint is for the sake of culture.

We accept this in education, and face to face with the extended regions of knowledge to-day we are forced to lay even increased stress on some forms of self-denial. The student, who would enter into truth, must be prepared to sacrifice much, and give up gratifications which are innocent and which appeal to his tastes, all for the sake of the subject to which he would bend his mind. He who would master any truth must learn what a jealous mistress he serves. The ascetic principle, which declares that man must renounce in order to gain, is not a strange freak, a curiosity in mental pathology; but is a principle of life with universal application all along the line of life. From the athlete to the student, and to the saint, renunciation is an essential feature of their experience. Professor Tyndall,[1] speaking of scientific inductive research, said, 'It requires patient industry, and a humble and conscientious acceptance of what nature reveals. The first condition of success is an honest receptivity,

[1] *Vide* Herbert Spencer, *Education*, p. 45 (pop. ed.).

and a willingness to abandon all preconceived notions, however cherished, if they be found to contradict the truth. Believe me, a self-renunciation which has something noble in it, and of which the world never hears, is often enacted in the private experience of the votary of science.'

Further, even without reference to what a man must give up in order to gain any height in life or study, it has to be noted that education itself of any kind worth the name, means restraint. In all schemes of education subjects are prescribed, not only for their own sake, but for the mental training the acquiring of them brings. In addition to the particular worth they may have to children in after years, there is the worth they have as *discipline*. All educationists take this into account perhaps first of all. When boys are set to learn Latin, or Mathematics, or Science, the first consideration is not the information received in these departments of knowledge, but the training of the mind. Discipline means self-control, bringing the mind under command. It is thus not confined to the physical side of life, but is necessary throughout the whole area. Intellect is only raw material, and needs to be shaped and polished till it takes an edge. Unconscious education begins very early, in which a child learns some of the practical limitations and restraints of life; but culture, the making of mind, means deliberate effort, a persistent attempt after complete mental development.

The making of character also is a task calling for deliberate effort, and for the wise and courageous use of the instruments; and here too it is found that, as without training no power of man can be truly developed, so without self-denial the higher life of man would be impossible. We can see how man would cease to be man in all that truly makes him man, if he allowed lower appetites, and ambitions, and desires, to run riot. Without self-restraint the whole order, and beauty, and worth of life are destroyed. A well-balanced character implies an all-round effective control. One unbridled passion is not only failure at a single point, but is an indication of failure at the centre also. In the best there are evil tendencies, and evil desires, that are ever clamant; so that in the ordinary conduct of life the habit of self-restraint is essential, if a straight course is to be steered, and even if fatal shipwreck is to be avoided. A weak, undisciplined nature, however naturally sweet and gentle and pure, is sure to meet some day a concourse of circumstances, or an overwhelming temptation, which will end in moral disaster. We constantly underestimate the power of a trained and restraining will, not only over outside circumstances, but also over the inner nature, amending constitutional defects, checking impulses, impelling to right courses of action, and thus altering the very character. Like every other faculty, the will needs to be educated and strengthened by the exercise of itself.

Of all the moral qualities there is nothing so important as the confirmed habit of self-restraint, and it is a necessity, unless a man is to be at the mercy of every wind and tide that tosses him at will. Our natural appetites and desires require government. Being but blind impulses, they need to be controlled and guarded from an excess, which would injure themselves, as well as mar the complete life. Just because man lives on another plane from the beasts, and possesses more power of gratification, he cannot leave his animal instincts undirected. For one thing, they grow by what they feed on, until, if unrestricted, they would usurp the whole life. There seems no limit to the degeneracy of human appetites; and this is true of other than mere animal passions, true of desires of the mind, such as ambition, love of acquisition, desire for honour. Indeed every capacity of our nature, however high, may become over-stimulated, or depraved in its tendency. The very powers of mind, and imagination, and heart, and spirit, which are proofs of man's nobility, can become degraded. For the sake of these powers themselves, for their true culture and perfection of working, there is needed an alert and strenuous control.

The eternal truth of asceticism then is that a man has to master himself, has to bring his being into subjection to the laws of health, and to the higher laws of holiness; that discipline is needed in every

sphere; that the energies and appetites must be subdued and ruled. Virtue has its moral worth in the restraint exercised, the effort put forth. Meekness, which is due to sluggishness of soul or feebleness of mind, is nothing to the meekness of a man who has conquered himself, who has controlled his passions, and put his foot on the neck of his selfish ambitions. We must bring into subjection everything that, if left alone, would subject us. There is a price for all this, which a man must pay if he would be perfect, if he would maintain the complete integrity of his being. Discipline means cost. For this a man must give up, go without, renounce, refuse to be drawn away from his purpose by any allurement. We are driven to use almost the very language of the ascetics, when we seriously consider duty in this moral region, as Huxley was driven to use similar language, starting though he did from the scientific principle of evolution. The lower must be forced to give way to the higher, if there is to be any moral progress—that is the first principle of a true man's life; and that is just another way of stating the duty which is at the root of all asceticism, of denying self and taking up a cross. The way to life is ever a narrow way. Sincere self-denial is an essential element of a noble life, without even taking into account the sacrifices for the sake of others which come to every man. To choose the better part means turning away from other ways that please the carnal mind. There are desires, passions, tempers,

that must be fought, temptations to be overcome. Not without watching, and prayer, and struggle, can the soul shake itself free from earthly clogs, and liberate itself from evil. Only by patient endurance can a man win his soul.[1] It is the man, who knows himself best, who knows how he must keep his foot on himself, in things that no one else imagines, perhaps in some sting of self-interest, some secret thought, some wounded pride, some selfishness. Every life has its own battlefield, where the lower wars against the higher. In that warfare men are trained in character; for only through discipline is true virtue possible.

With all its faults, therefore—and these faults, as we shall see, are terrible—asceticism even in its most extreme forms is at least based on a solemn, serious view of life, and manfully accepts life as discipline. It at least knew that a saint, any more than a scholar in his sphere, is not made in a day; and it set its heart on sainthood. Men of this high temper turned in disgust from the levity, and frivolity, and corruption of the world, and hated the sins of their own hearts and lives, as well as the sins of their social environment, and in a stern passion for holiness did not shrink from the knife. Asceticism, which was not content with the ordinary opportunities for self-denial which life offers, and added to it world-denial, did a grievous wrong to the world, and to the Church, and even in the long-run to the ascetics' own best

[1] Luke xxi. 19, R.V.

life; but it had the merit of being in earnest. The method was a mistake, but the spirit, which at first inspired it, was noble and true. There is a puritan heart in all real religion, an austere spirit which is always associated in some measure with a lofty ideal. The austerity is not formal, or assumed for its own sake, but is the necessary fruit of high thought and noble endeavour. The high demands the sacrifice of the low, if only to maintain its own existence. The man who has seen the vision will allow nothing to come in the way, no craving of flesh, no desire of personal pleasure; and this will be in proportion to the altitude of the standard. Religion thus makes life strenuous. This is indeed its great gift to life, to add point, and passion, and directness to its aims, a gift which saves human powers from decay. It gives the concentration needed to make a life virile. Without the self-restraint, associated with the name of Puritanism, heroic life is impossible either for a man or a nation.

Something of the same stiffening and hardening influence is needed by us as a society to-day, in our flaccid, ease-loving, pleasure-seeking time. We may bewail in sentiment the social sins, drunkenness, gambling, vice; but these cannot be cured by mere tinkering methods of legislation or of education. We need a breath of the old spirit of earnestness to sweep through our midst. No process of self-culture, however wide its programme, which neglects

the moral needs of men, will avail much by itself. If we are to be saved from these social sins, and saved from the inevitable national weakness which they mean, it must come from within, from a renewed ideal of duty. We need Puritanism, made patient and made tender by love, driving its power not into forms of repression but into channels of service. Our Lord's word must come with fresh force to us, to deny ourselves, to bend to His yoke, and accept the full consequences of our faith.

Any self-culture, which is only a subtle form of self-indulgence, stands condemned before the high passion of this other ideal, that enters into something of the mystery of the cross. We feel instinctively that, in spite of all mistakes, those who have renounced the world and its enticements, who have trod with bleeding feet the narrow way, who have denied themselves all indulgence, have made a nobler choice, than those who have never burned for perfection, and never known the patience of the saints, but have weakly given in to every impulse, and sought gratification in every easy pleasure. If these two methods exhausted the alternatives, if the choice were confined to these, every true and earnest man would be compelled to accept even the mutilation of life, rather than the degradation of life; and sometimes indeed it has seemed to men that there was no other choice, and at such periods the noblest spirits are to be found among the fanatics. There have been times when a serious

man was shut up to some form of abstinence, times even when, as Dean Church says in his *St. Anselm*, 'That which of itself presented itself to the thoughts of a man in earnest, wishing not only to do right, but to do the best he could to fulfil God's purpose and his own calling by self-improvement, was the monastic profession.' Whole periods of the history of the Church and of modern Europe will remain out of perspective to us, and the very system of monasticism will look to us as a sort of mysterious madness, unless we appreciate that fact. Fanaticism may be, as Lamartine called it when speaking of the Girondists, a delirium of virtue; but its excesses are often due to the previous reign of evil, due to the deadweight of the world's enmity not only against God but against man's best life.

To-day there is a danger of ascetic reaction from the practical materialism of modern life. It is a danger, because it is ever tempted to put the emphasis in the wrong place; but some kind of reaction seems inevitable. Certainly, self-denial of some sort is necessary as a protest against our modern gospel of comfort, as if man's chief end were to have plenty of victuals. Better the sternness and rigour of Puritanism, than the soft, flaccid accommodation to evil which comes so natural in an easy civilisation. Brought face to face with some of the evils of our city life, with luxury and misery side by side, and with the experience of the emptiness of so many worldly ideals, the stern

word to flee these things seems to come to us. At least we ought to be alive to the fact that with our materialistic ideals of life we are preparing for another protest in the name of the soul, which refuses to be submerged by the details of living. When so much of our life is irreligious and Godless, when so much stress is laid on the outside of life, when the common cult of the day is that a man should follow his impulses without restraint, when evil is condoned as natural, and unearthly ideals are mocked at as superstition, men who are susceptible to spiritual influences are tempted to advocate and practise the opposite as protest. Perhaps even the monk is not such an extinct species of the human family as Carlyle[1] thought, since the great motive which led to monasticism lies deep in human nature. It would probably surprise some to know how deep and wide is this counter-current, alongside of the more apparent stream of modern life. Even in Protestant countries there has of late years been a remarkable growth of monastic life, or at least of kindred manifestations. 'Among other strange phenomena of the waning century, we see once more rising among us, as if by enchantment, the religious orders of the Middle Ages; Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans; houses of monks and nuns, to which American and English ladies and gentlemen are once more gathering as of old, flying no longer from a world of violence or profligacy, but from a world

[1] *Past and Present*, Bk. II. ch. i.

of emptiness and spiritual death.'[1] The increase of so-called 'High-Church' principles is only an evidence of revolt against low ideals, a blundering revolt if we like, but a very real one: the emphasis on fasting, retreats, and the contemplative life generally, the growth of brotherhoods and sisterhoods, only follow the line which history prepares us to expect.

We must sympathise with all serious attempts to purify life; with everything which betokens a desire after Godliness, even though its form may seem to us to be mistaken or dangerous; with every high endeavour to oppose, in Huxley's phrase, the cosmic process at every step, in order to give the ethical process a chance. We must sympathise with all such, if we have ever thrilled to the high passion of St. Paul, when he wrote his burning words, 'Mortify your members which are on the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness; for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them; but now ye also put off all these.'[2] Often we must have longed for some touch of Puritanism to move our modern life, and make it more strong and pure and sweet. And it will. The high heart of man will not rest for ever in the deeps of thought and deed, but will reassert itself somehow. We must lay our account to the fact that the nature of man has not changed, and the needs of life are pretty much

[1] J. A. Froude, *Short Studies*, vol. iii. p. 6 (1888). [2] Col. iii. 5.

what they have been throughout the centuries. In a very real sense every good man has to practise some sort of asceticism; he must give up, if he would be true to his ideal. It is a false culture which gives free play to every instinct, and ends, as it must, in making life a wilderness, not a garden. The very name culture implies the hoe and the pruning-knife, for the perfect cultivation of life's acre; as in gardening there must be the suppression of the weeds to give the flowers room. In every true life there is sacrifice, struggle, things to forsake in obedience to the heavenly vision, at the call of the higher nature. When there is a conflict between a man's tastes and his duty—and these conflicts come to all—he must refuse the cravings which his conscience tells him to be lower.

The Christian Church has often played into the hands of enemies by interpreting the command not to love the world [1] as the denial of the work, and duties, and obligations which devolve upon men, the ordinary activities, and relationships, and business which men transact for the upkeep of life; but there is a true sense in which the command applies. The 'world' is a much less definite thing than that interpretation makes out, even less definite than Huxley's 'cosmic process,' but it is as real as ourselves. How indefinite it is we see when we try to make a list of the things we would call *worldly*.

[1] 1 John ii. 15.

We cannot draw a line, and say about every occupation, or amusement, or manner of living: This is Christian, and that is not; This is worldly, and that is not. And yet we know what worldliness is, and if we are sensitive to spiritual suggestions we can recognise it when we see it. As a general definition, it stands to us for the great mass of things that organise themselves against God. It is a spirit of enmity, all that in our environment is against the life of the soul, the lower principle that stubbornly resists the higher, the deadweight of evil or of opposition to good, the inertia that drags itself against every upward pull. The spirit of the world seems a vague, meaningless term, but it becomes an awful reality to the man who has run counter to it. If it were just one thing, or one set of things, which we could brand as evil, and then strenuously avoid; if it meant just one earnest protest and defiance, the problem would be easy. But the foe is insidious; it evades the point of the sword, and changes shape and colour; and the fight is life-long. If one were to gibbet some practice or habit as the enemy of soul, and made us look at the hateful thing till the memory of it and the hate of it burned into our brain, and then summed up all moral duty in the command to flee from that, it would be an easy task; but he might be only gibbeting *his* world, and not coming within a thousand miles of what our world means, and where the fight is hot and fierce in our corner of the field.

This is one of the serious faults of all external forms of morality, such as asceticism has commonly signified, crystallising evil into one or two typical sinful passions. The problem is far more complicated than such methods can touch. This conspiracy against the regal claims of the soul, which we sum up in the word 'world,' is the *secular spirit*, different at different times and for different people, the great fascinating scheme of things regarded as apart from God, the inert but powerful antagonism of matter against spirit, of sense against soul, of social conventions and prejudices against the new and the high. In every life, and in every scene of history, there are the two spirits contending for masterdom, and one of them in various guises is the world. It may be organised force, as it was to the early Church, force materialised in the Roman Empire with the Emperor enthroned as God; it may be self-indulgence and countless appeals to the lower instincts, as in every pagan and semi-pagan civilisation; it may be vulgar mammon-worship, as perhaps with us, the sleek gospel of material comfort.

To the individual in his particular sphere of work, it is the conspiracy of conventions and precedents, that keep him from realising his own highest ideal; to the artist the temptation to paint pot-boilers for a Philistine market, since nobody seems to want anything else; the author to write for money, or pander to the taste of the crowd; the statesman

to sacrifice principle to expediency; the preacher to speak claptrap to tickle ears, rather than the dearly bought spiritual truth to move hearts to nobler life. In every sphere, and every calling, and every life, there are the two voices, and the tug-of-war for masterdom, sense impinging on soul, the ideal valorously struggling with the conventional; duty, 'the stern daughter of the voice of God,' against pleasure with her siren song. It is an attitude, a spirit—not the flesh or the eye or life as such, but the lust of flesh or eye, and the pride of life. The definition may be vague, but we know what the 'world' means to us, if we are honest with ourselves; we know the weak spot where it strikes home to our heart; as we know what Wordsworth meant when he used the same word—

> The world is too much with us, late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

Whatever keeps us from being our best self, whatever is dwarfing us from our true stature, is the place where we need to apply 'askesis,' the discipline of a self-controlled will. The ascetic ideal has an element of eternal truth, without which life can have no true culture.

George Herbert, from his birth, and breeding, and tastes, had some of the struggle implied in all renunciation, after he gave up worldly hopes at court to serve as a humble servant in the Temple. He describes the natural craving of human instincts

for full satisfaction, kicking against the pricks of duty; and he reveals the ultimate result which made sacrifice easy. This he does with wonderful art in *The Collar*, the quaint title implying the restraint. It brings out the first instinctive desire of nature for full and free culture, and at the same time suggests the higher impulse which holds it in check. The place and power of the ascetic ideal, in face of the dominant appeal for self-expression, are indicated in such subtle and yet forceful manner in the poem that we cannot refrain from quoting it, as it states the case for repression as many pages of prose might fail to do. Just when the argument for the world's joy seems complete, there bursts out the imperial note of the higher nature silencing the voice of the lower.

I struck the board, and cried, 'No more;
I will abroad.
What! shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free; free as the road,
Loose as the wind, as large as store.
Shall I be still in suit?
Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me blood, and not restore
What I have lost with cordial fruit?
Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn
Before my tears did drown it.
Is the year only lost to me?
Have I no bays to crown it,
No flowers, no garlands gay? All blasted,
All wasted?
Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.

Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures; leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit, and not; forsake thy cage,
Thy rope of sands,
Which petty thoughts have made, and made to thee
Good cable to enforce and draw,
And be thy law,
While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
Away! take heed:
I will abroad.
Call in thy death's-head there: tie up thy fears.
He that forbears
To suit and serve his need
Deserves his load.'

But as I raved, and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling, 'Child!'
And I replied, 'My Lord!'

CHAPTER VII

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF ASCETICISM

When we think of how far the ascetic ideal was pushed in the Church, the extent to which various kinds of mortification reached, self-torture carried to its furthest extreme, the huge spread of the monastic system, we wonder how such forms of devotion could come from the sweet, natural piety and gentle, loving spirit of the Christian faith. In the earliest age the strong, simple faith and the deep joy made life easy; so that there is something of the wonder of spring about the early Church, the miracle of effortless growth, the rich exuberance of life, the entrancing beauty of simplicity and naturalness. The birth of the Church was like the birth of the year, with the exhilaration and graceful ease of spring. In the Acts of the Apostles we do not find the same strenuous attitude of protest against the world, which afterwards is noticed in the Church. To go from the atmosphere of the Acts of the Apostles to that of the Church Councils is like going from the freshness of spring to the heat and burden of summer. In the

early Church, with the dew of her youth on her, we notice an ease and a naturalness, which we miss in subsequent stages of history. Life was pervaded with a wonderful joy, and was not spoiled by anything sour, or morose, or melancholy. Why should they be sad, when Christ had come, and was their risen, and ascended, and living Saviour? There was nothing strained, or ascetic, or unnatural in their manner of life. In the flush and fervour of their first love, life adjusted itself easily and sweetly. Take such a picture as is seen in these words, 'Day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.'[1] The natural human virtues and the common social joys flourished in their united brotherhood; and the common things of every day were done with a sweet and cheerful grace. The disciples' faith brought an exultant sense of mastery over life, and of victory over the world; and so love and the fruits of love abounded. It was, perhaps, too idyllic a mood to last, and it certainly did not last. The Church of the Apostles became the Church of the Martyrs. The Christian converts, who only asked to be allowed to live their gracious lives of love and service in peace, had to go through the fire. The Church lost its early gladness, and sometimes even its singleness of heart.

[1] Acts ii. 46, R.V.

Apart from times of distress and persecution, the Christian life generally became more of a struggle, as the essential opposition to pagan life unfolded itself. They were given as one of the tasks of religion to keep themselves unspotted from the world, to conform to the law of holiness, to regulate their lives by higher motives, and restraints, and sanctions. To the early Christians the gulf fixed between the faith and the ordinary pagan life was greater than could possibly be to-day, in a civilisation softened, and to some extent formed, by Christianity. The world stood to them for implacable enmity against God, and sleepless, unabated protest became the necessary attitude; so that the temper of the Church was hardened in fibre, as it stood against the prevailing corruptions. The garments could be kept clean, and hearts remain unspotted, only by sore struggle. To understand the beginnings of the ascetic system, that seems so divorced from the thought and example of Christ, we need to transplant ourselves in imagination to the environment of the early Church, though what the pagan environment was at its worst it is happily impossible for us even to imagine.

It is a common idea to assume that the sort of life, briefly pictured in the words we quoted from the Acts of the Apostles, is a feature of pagan life rather than Christian. In books innumerable it is set forth that this sweet, natural joy of living, with its instinctive mirth, and its social pleasures, and its innocence of heart, is the typical pagan life; whereas

the typical Christian life is bloodless, and unnatural, and courts sorrow, and worships death. This is the groundwork on which many of our poets and writers create their contrasts; and many poetic tears are shed that the pale Galilean should have swept from the world Apollo and the beautiful gods. The description of pagan life as a genial, sprightly, poetic thing is false to fact, and false to history except a very surface reading of history. When the Christian faith entered the world, that youthful stage of paganism had long passed; and we find a corruption and shame of life, a despair of truth, a colossal selfishness, and a complete breakdown of the sanctions of morality which keep society together. The condition of human society in Europe at the time is beyond description, though outwardly social order was maintained by the strong hand of the Roman Empire. It is not only that the grossest evils were rampant, but that the very source of life itself, even religion, was turned into a corrupt influence.

If by typical we mean what a system results in, the ultimate life which is its outcome, it seems a monstrous absurdity to draw the contrast between the pagan and the Christian life to which we refer. If we want to know the typical pagan life of the time of the early Church, we must find it not in such dreams of groves and nymphs about which our writers rave; we will find it in the terrible indictment of St. Paul in the first chapter of the

Epistle to the Romans; we will find it written in terms of history in the annals of Tacitus, and in terms of morals in the satires of Juvenal. We will find it in the hopelessness of truth which oppressed the best of men, the corruption of life which came from the breakdown of the pagan faith, in the oppression and sorrow of the people, in the shame of courts, in the despair of philosophy. Philosophers had degenerated into rhetoricians. In the lecture-rooms moral good and evil were as counters in an intellectual game, with no practical bearing on life. The keenest of Lucian's satires were levelled at the philosophers, for the infamy of their lives, as well as the futility of their hair-splitting speculations; and next to them his bitter sarcasm struck at the priests of the pagan religion, who made the sacred Mysteries the grossest of orgies. We have endless evidence of the degradation of religion itself from sources that are not Christian, to corroborate the testimony of men like St. Augustine, who writes, 'I myself, when a young man, used sometimes to go to the sacrilegious entertainments and spectacles; I saw the priests raving in religious excitement, and heard the choristers; I took pleasure in the shameful games which were celebrated in the honour of gods and goddesses, of the virgin Coelestis, and Berecynthia, the mother of all the gods. And on the day consecrated to her purification, there were sung before her couch productions so obscene and filthy to the ear—I do not say of the mother of the

gods, but of the mother of any senator or honest man—nay, so impure that not even the mother of the foul-mouthed players themselves could have formed one of the audience.'[1] When religion was corrupt, the very fountain of life was corrupted at its source; and the state of society was such that the facts could not be written in English and need to be left, as Gibbon declared he left all the licentious passages in writing his history, 'in the obscurity of a learned language.'[2] Suetonius, Seneca, and every pagan writer who touches at all on the social conditions, reveal the moral putrefaction that existed. In the course of an argument about the lending of money, Seneca throws out some features of the social state in dark silhouette by a casual illustration in which he says that gentlewomen reckon their age not by the number of their years but by the number of their husbands, and that chastity was so rare that it was counted only as an argument of deformity. The chapter[3] is a lurid condemnation of the state of affairs, more convincing because it is casually introduced merely as an illustration of another point. Mr. Lecky in his *History of European Morals* records a simple fact when he says that the pages of Suetonius are an eternal witness of abysses of depravity, hideous and intolerable cruelty,

[1] Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, ii. 4.
[2] Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life* (ed. 1900), p. 231.
[3] Seneca, *De Ben.* iii. 17.

and hitherto unimagined extravagances of nameless lust. There was a gangrene in the heart of society. Matthew Arnold expresses the truth in his strong lines,

> On that hard pagan world disgust
> And secret loathing fell.
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell.

A protest in the name of the soul was bound to be made; and made it was, even before Christianity. 'The ancient world had arrived, by all the routes of its complicated development, at the bitterest criticism of, and disgust at, its own existence.'[1] The protest was a counsel of despair, and took the form of some sort of asceticism; for men felt that the only policy open to them was to cut connection with the world, which was so evil. There are, as we shall see, speculative and philosophic reasons why asceticism took such strong hold of the world in so many different countries and different periods; but the practical motive is ever the recognition of evil, which becomes intolerable, and which drives men into violent protest. The complete ascetic separation from the world is not peculiarly Christian—in fact it is not Christian at all. Rather, in essence, it is opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which calls on believers to be leaven to leaven the whole lump of society, salt to keep the earth pure, light to lighten the world. It is indeed the pagan remedy

[1] Harnack, *History of Dogma* (Eng. Trans.), vol. iii. p. 123.

for the pagan sins, but, as we must acknowledge, it was a very natural remedy for earnest men to adopt. It is found in other religions—in Buddhism, for example, where it is a fundamental principle of the religion. In Greece, though it was alien to the whole Greek temperament, the followers of Pythagoras combined asceticism of life with mysticism of creed; and the Cynics have been called the monks of Stoicism, probably because they really put into practice the principles of contempt for luxury and comfort, and abstinence from pleasure, which were often only items of creed with Stoics. Even among the Jews, to whom for other reasons than with the Greeks it was even more alien, we find such manifestations as that of the Essenes, who lived in renunciation of the world. Pliny, referring to the growth of the Essenes, in spite of the fact that they renounced marriage, and that therefore the sect could only increase by making converts, accounts for their numbers by the repentant disgust which life itself breeds in men.[1]

It was natural, when men were touched by the new passion for purity which Christ brought, that they should be filled even more with disgust and loathing. Called out from an environment like that which we have indicated, and with the personal struggle intensified by their own habits, and education, and inclinations, we may well expect a certain austerity of tone, which would justify even forms

[1] *Tam fœcunda illis aliorum vitæ pœnitentia est.*

of violent protest. To escape from the constant enticement of the world in which they were compelled to live, might easily seem to a man the only complete way of attaining mastery over self. When we think of the whole situation of men, who were set to keep themselves unspotted from evil, we are not surprised to find early in the history of the Church ascetic exercises creeping in, due chiefly to the necessary protest against the terrible evils of pagan life. The process was slow and unequal in different places, but it was sure. In the earliest records of the sub-apostolic age we see how the 'law' gradually came to mean, not the law of love, working itself out amid all the relations of life, but the commandments of ascetic holiness. We trace the slight beginnings of this even in such an early record as the *Didache*, the Teaching of the Apostles.

Possibly the stage of austere asceticism was an inevitable one in the history of the Church; and certainly the austere view of life was a necessity at the time. Before the Christian faith could lay hold of the world for its own high mission, it had to begin with negative work; it had to uproot the heathenish vices, and brand sin as hateful in the conscience of men. This involved the risk of the negative tendency being exaggerated, as indeed turned out to be the case, but the one-sidedness of the ascetic tendency was a natural phenomenon. The disgust of pagan life led, as was to be expected, to extravagances; but before spiritual life was

possible the long unclean list, which St. Paul gives more than once in his Epistles, had to be put off by Christian converts. At any and every cost they had to mortify the evil passions and practices, in which they had also walked. Self-denial was the first step, and it was natural enough that the idea should grow in men, who were face to face with the corruption and depravity of pagan society, that the only course open to them was as complete separation from the world as possible. It is not enough to dismiss a great system, which grew to such proportions as Monasticism did, by Gibbon's explanation: 'These unhappy exiles from social life were impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition. Their mutual resolution was supported by the example of millions, of either sex, of every age, and of every rank; and each proselyte, who entered the gates of a monastery, was persuaded that he trod the steep and thorny path of eternal happiness. But the operation of these religious motives was variously determined by the temper and situation of mankind. Reason might subdue, or passion might suspend, their influence; but they acted most forcibly on the infirm minds of children and females; they were strengthened by secret remorse, or accidental misfortune; and they might derive some aid from the temporal considerations of vanity or interest.'[1]

Such a criticism is self-destructive; for, if it

[1] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xxxvii.

was adopted by millions of either sex, and every age and rank, there can be no explanation in the sneer about the infirm minds of children and females. It is a travesty of fact also; for the strongest and ablest men of the early Christian centuries belonged to one or other of the different grades of the ascetics, and defended the system—men like Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome. Besides, it is a false interpretation of history to explain great and permanent movements by the unworthy motives, which always are mixed up with human affairs; for it is not these which give it its power and its permanence. It is quite true that less pure motives weighed with many, who embraced the monastic life, especially when it became popular, and was a recognised path to fame and power; but such a system must have justified itself to some extent in what it actually achieved. And for some centuries it did so justify itself, not only in the personal good that came to individual souls from their sacrifice, but also in the services rendered to the whole body politic, which we will consider briefly later on. In many such criticisms, also, it is forgotten that the whole movement was not a clerical one at all in its origin, but began as a lay profession in the devotion of self-sacrificing zeal of earnest men. Monasticism was forced on the Church, which was compelled to recognise it, so spontaneous and strong was the stream. Indeed,

by taking the movement in and regulating it, the Church saved it from disrule and speedy degradation, and used it for centuries as a valuable engine for the good of the world.

The real truth is that the spirit, which drove men into such extreme forms of self-denial, as were practised by many, was only an exaggerated form of the essential spirit which pervaded the whole Church. It was an exaggeration of the normal moral earnestness, which was a mark of a Christian, an earnestness taken out of its true sphere, and thus running to inevitable excess. One of the reasons which Gibbon himself gives for the remarkable victory of the Christian faith over the established religions of the earth at the time, is the pure and austere morals of the Christians, though he tries to show that these were largely due to the laudable desire of supporting the reputation of the Church. 'Their serious and sequestered life, averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. As the greater number were of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions, which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearances of sanctity. The contempt of the world exercised them in habits of humility, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other. Their mutual charity and unsuspecting

confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends.'[1] It is a good certificate of character. A certain austerity was natural in men, who were called as part of the essence of their faith to put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man with the qualities of the new life—mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, long-suffering, charity. Tertullian asks with noble triumph whether among all the crowd of criminals any Christians are ever arraigned for crimes of violence, or theft, or sacrilege. He points with pride to the fact that the only legal crime for which Christians are condemned is for being Christians.[2] The existence of this universal austere spirit implied the danger of a strained condition of some; but, if this austerity got out of its legitimate channel of the ordinary common life of the world, and rushed to fanatical extreme in a wrong channel, it was largely due to the violence of reaction, which we see so copiously illustrated in all human history.

In all the above statement we have merely given the historical environment which affords to asceticism the suitable conditions for increase; but before we consider the speculative thought at the root of the ascetic ideal, which is its principle of vitality, we will notice the forms it took in the Christian Church in the process of its growth. The ethical value, which Christianity undoubtedly places on

[1] *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv. [2] Tertullian, *Apology*, chap. xliv.

self-denial, was in the early years never allowed to assume undue proportions. Formal acts like fasting, or voluntary celibacy, were not looked upon as meritorious in themselves, or as necessary parts of religious duty. When there was renunciation of any sort, it was kept in its true place, as only a means of reaching a higher virtue. There were no irrevocable vows taken or imposed, and it was not supposed that the clergy were in a special sense called to an ascetic life. Even clerical celibacy, which ultimately became universal in the Church, was the result of a slow and long process. Married bishops are common even in the fourth and fifth centuries, as, for example, the father of Gregory Nazianzen, and Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais, who is one of the characters in Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia.*

Gradually, however, asceticism came more and more to be valued for its own sake, and became more and more fanatical. The early ascetics did not break away from the world, but lived among the Christian community, only distinguished by special sanctity of life. It is not till the third century that we find instances of the hermit life, and this seems to have been occasioned first of all by the persecutions which scattered believers, and forced many to seek safety in desert places. The monastic system had its origin in these Hermits or Anchorites, who lived as Solitaries, and found a scanty subsistence in the wilderness, and gave them-

selves up to holy meditation and prayer. Persecution, as it always does, fanned the flame of fanaticism, and the temper of men grew hard in the fire. During the persecution of Maximinus, the most famous of these hermits, St. Anthony, came into notice, and found many imitators. The Thebaid of Upper Egypt became peopled by Solitaries, who increased enormously, and it was there that the Cœnobite life, or what we now mean by the monastic, became an institution. It was the gathering of the separate hermits into one house or monastery, and so bringing them under a common rule; and it was this monastic form which proved itself the fittest by surviving and displacing the other. The ordinary needs of the religious life made this inevitable—the need of common worship and mutual edification, the desire for the sacraments of the Church, and the need of an outlet for faith in some form of social service. Besides, it was soon seen that all sorts of extravagances and eccentricities issued from the isolate hermit state, in which each lived after his own fancy, some choosing the top of pillars, others living in trees, some called Boskoi or Grazers, because they lived on roots and herbs, some who practised mystic dances, an ancient anticipation of the modern Shakers. The whole system would have ended in madness, but for the introduction of regular monasteries. In course of time comprehensive rules were formed, as by Basil the Great, and later on by the founders of the more important orders. These, besides the

vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and the ordinary spiritual discipline, usually included instructions about labour, and even, as in St. Benedict's rule, instructions regarding the teaching of youth, copying manuscripts, and other employments. The system was much slower in taking root in Western Europe than it was in the more congenial soil of the East, but it did at last take firm hold, till it ultimately was co-extensive with Christendom.

In addition to the reasons already mentioned, such as that it afforded for individuals escape from evil in their environment, and offered opportunities for the development of the contemplative life, the explanation of such remarkable growth lay in the distinct services to the Church and the world, which monasteries were enabled at different periods to render. Its value in the first centuries as a missionary agency was immense, presenting to rude peoples the inspiring spectacle of Christ-like men, who had given up all selfish ambitions, and who were not affected by the ordinary motives. The early monks made a great moral impression by the unselfishness and austerity of their lives. Their sincerity and godly character influenced the minds of barbarous tribes as nothing else could do, and won their respect and confidence. Among heathen people they were the most effective missionaries, and carried the gospel into many dark places of the earth. Unworldliness, the capacity for prolonged endurance, a simple-hearted devotion to duty, will always command

influence over men, quite apart from the question whether these qualities are exercised for right or wrong ends. This fact soon became known to Church leaders, who sometimes used the system for Church purposes, as for example when Basil established a company of monks in Cappadocia to counteract Arianism, which had a stronghold there. Men, who are above the common motives which sway others, have an empire over hearts by virtue of their sacrifice. Sozomen[1] states that the reason why the Arian and Apollinarist heresies had no permanent success in the Church, was because the Solitaries of the day took part against them. The ascetics adhered to the Nicene creed, and the people had such reverence for their character and work, that they trusted their doctrine to be orthodox.

We cannot do anything like historic justice to the monastic system also, without admitting the practical good it achieved in various lines throughout the centuries that followed. The monasteries in their pure state were always schools of labour, in which the day was divided into work and prayer. They were also schools of charity, for the poor who lived within reach, for travellers and pilgrims passing through. It cannot be forgotten, also, that in some periods of European history they served a useful part in mitigating the distresses of the time, as a refuge for the oppressed. Amid the wars and conquests of the Middle Ages they remained inviolate

[1] *History*, vi. 27.

among the wildest violence, on account of the sanctity attached to the character of the inmates, or to the place itself. They were humanising centres, as they had been in pagan or semi-pagan, so also in nominally Christian countries, convincing men of the sincerity of the Religious by the self-denial they practised. Especially was this the case after the great religious revival, associated with the name of the Franciscans at the beginning of the thirteenth century. It is an indication at once of the wonderful extension of the Franciscan order and of their essential spirit, that in the next century after their foundation, during the Black Death, more than a hundred thousand Franciscans died through their nursing of the sick and ministering to the dying. It was a new conception of monastic duty, which made the care of others as important a feature of their work as the personal spiritual sanctification, which had been the first thought of the early monks. Mr. Lecky, who is certainly not biassed in their favour, only does monks fair justice when he states, —'Every monastery became a centre of charity. By the monks the nobles were overawed, the poor protected, the sick tended, travellers sheltered, prisoners ransomed, the remotest spheres of suffering explored. During the darkest period of the Middle Ages, monks founded a refuge for pilgrims amid the horrors of the Alpine snows. . . . When the hideous disease of leprosy extended its ravages over Europe, and men's minds were filled with terror, not

only by its loathsomeness and its contagion, but also by the notion that it was in a peculiar sense supernatural, hospitals overspread Europe, and monks flocked in multitudes to serve them.'[1]

Some of these good results, however, must not be laid to the account of asceticism, as they were due rather to a neglect of the logical conclusions of their creed. The great monastic orders, after all, made their impress on the world, not through any individual asceticism on the part of their members, but through their useful labours as an order, through creating new and better social conditions, or ameliorating conditions that were hard, which really meant modifying the original purpose of the system. The first great example of such modification is found in the Benedictines, the rules of whose order enjoined some useful employment on every monk. With them a high place was given to education; study was encouraged, and the copying of manuscripts was an established practice, so that their monasteries became repositories of learning.

It is quite true that we can find some historic causes for the great extension of the system in unworthy motives, both on the part of some who entered, and on the part of the Church which countenanced it. It is quite true that the Church encouraged it latterly, even after its most useful days were past, as a means of securing her complete ascendency. The submissive spirit, which was held

[1] Lecky, *Hist. of European Morals*, vol. ii.

out as the ideal, and which reached its limits in Monasticism, naturally suited a dominant Church; not to speak of the immense wealth, which came into her hands in various ways, as well as from those who adopted the monastic habit. But, as we have had already occasion to show, all the unworthy motives put together could not account for the vitality and extent of any great organisation; and it must not be forgotten that the monastic system had its roots in a deeply religious instinct.

The hold it took on the mind of man for centuries was immense; and it gave an ascetic colour even to those who were in revolt against it, creating a peculiar conscience, and an introspective habit of thought. This is seen in a remarkable manner from a scene in the life of Petrarch, who was a typical Humanist, and had naturally little sympathy with the ascetic ideal. He was a child of the Renaissance, and had a love of natural beauty which was almost unique in his time. On one occasion he climbed Mount Ventoux, and describes his amazement at the wonderful view of hills and valleys, land and sea; but just at the moment of keenest enjoyment there came a revulsion of feeling, which showed him to be a child of the monastic age, as well as of the Renaissance. He writes: 'Thus gazing, now singling out some single object, now letting my sight range far into the distance, now raising eyes and soul to heaven, I unconsciously drew out of my pocket Augustine's *Confessions*, a book I always carry with me, and it

opened at this passage, "Men go to wonder at the peaks of the mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the broad rivers, the great ocean, the circles of the stars, and for these things forget themselves." I trembled at these words, shut the book, and fell into a rage with myself for gaping at earthly things when I ought to have learned long ago, even from heathen philosophers, that the soul is the only great and astonishing thing. Silent I left the mountain, and turned my view from the things without me to that within.'[1] It is a false sentiment, but with a heart of truth, and it graphically describes the inwardness, with which the long history of monasticism penetrated the naturally active and practical temper of Western Europe. It also helps to explain some of the features of the Renaissance, the queer mixture of sentimental religiousness combined with an absolute lack of moral perspective, seen in most glaring contrast in such a character as Benvenuto Cellini; and it helps to explain even the abnormal excesses of some Humanists, as due to an uneasy conscience, which had been trained to consider the ascetic ideal the highest.

All that we have hitherto urged does not explain the firm grip which asceticism took of human life, but only shows how it received the suitable environment. It is not explained even by the undoubted sympathy it has with some notes of the Christian

[1] *Vide* Van Dyke, *Age of Renascence*, p. 28 (T. and T. Clark).

faith, such as the emphasis on heart-religion and on spiritual union with God. It is too contradictory of other essential marks of Christianity to be thus explained. Besides, such considerations do not explain the existence of asceticism in other and pre-Christian religions, where it has been carried to greater extremes than in the Church. We need to look beyond Christian history for the root conception of asceticism, and this is found in the Oriental answer to the problem of the origin of evil. The deepest thought in all ascetic practice is that sin is due to matter or to the body of man. That this is so is further evidenced by the fact that complete asceticism only entered the Church through the Oriental admixture of ideas in Gnosticism, where the supposed enlightenment, which Gnostics claimed for themselves by special revelation, was dependent on certain ascetic rites. It is difficult for us to realise the terrible struggle which this heresy brought to the Church of the second century, so apart is the type of speculation from our modern view of looking at the world.

Gnosticism got its name from laying emphasis on supposed knowledge (*gnosis*), thinking more of intellectual apprehension of spiritual truth than of faith. It was the influence of pagan speculation on the Christian faith. One of its purposes was an attempt to solve the old riddle of the origin of evil; and this it did in connection with its special doctrine of creation, which meant practical *dualism*, separating God from the world, the one being the principle

of good, the other the evil principle. It thus accepted the common Oriental position that evil is inherent in matter. It explained the creation of the world by a series of stages, of emanations from God, each becoming less divine, until matter (which was evil) was formed and made the lowest link in the chain. Of course there is no solution in this, even as a theory from their own premises; but it is a common fallacy, to which some scientific men of our own day have been prone, to imagine that an explanation is reached by positing an endless series either of time or of stages, and to imagine that the description of a *method* explains a process or a cause. We can see how the Gnostics were forced to some such conclusion as they reached; as their starting-point was the absolute antagonism between spirit and matter. Since God could have no direct connection with what was essentially evil, they interposed spiritual beings between God and man, who, as they were the means of communication with God, naturally also became objects of worship. All kinds of weird mysticism in various Gnostic systems grew out of this theosophy, combining in varying degree different elements of Christian truth; but the one common feature was a dualism, in which the world of matter, as being evil, was opposed to God.

The moral results of this creed ran in two opposite directions which at first seem contradictory, but are seen to have the same source; one was towards

asceticism, the other towards licence. It is not difficult to understand how these two opposing ethical conceptions grew from the same root. (1) If matter be evil, and man is bound up in matter, the spirit is to be freed by as complete abstinence as possible, by having as little to do with the physical as can be, by mortifying the body. The more we reduce the contact, the better chance we have of avoiding defilement: the more the cord that binds soul and body is attenuated, the purer the soul becomes. The way to attain spirituality is to suppress and uproot the sensuous.

(2) But at the best this can only be partial. We cannot altogether, do what we like, escape the malignant touch of surrounding evil, so long as we live. So the opposite rule was arrived at, that matter does not really count in the spiritual life of man, that instead of fighting and trampling on it, the best way to show contempt of it is to pay no heed to it. Let a man just follow the bent of his nature ; let him treat the evil matter as something outside of himself. The world of sense is a thing apart, and has no claims over the spirit. So, riotous libertinism was often the result of the very theory, which also produced the fiercest severity to the body ; both alike due to the selfsame thought of the essential contradiction of the sensuous and the spiritual elements of human nature.

Still, though licence of life was an inevitable effect to many, as a matter of fact to the more serious and

religious minds the other alternative of asceticism was the course chosen. The tendency to make religion a mystery, as was the case with Gnosticism, is naturally accompanied to a sincerely religious man with a tendency to make morality ascetic. For, 'just in proportion as the divine is separated from the human, and the Christian conception of their unity loses its direct relation to life, salvation gets to be conceived as a deliverance of man from the world, and not as a deliverance of the world from itself, or as the realisation of the divine spirit in it. The idea that the natural is essentially impure, and that the ideal life is, so far as possible, to escape from it, is the necessary result of a religious doctrine that breaks the bond between God and His creatures.'[1]

Against Gnosticism the Church of the second century had to fight for very life, and she has since borne the scars of the struggle both in creed and in practice. It was a formidable rival, partly because ascetic tendencies were widely spread at the time, and partly because the polytheistic instincts of pagan peoples would be satisfied by angel-worship and similar features. But the danger chiefly lay in the Church coming to terms with it rather for the sake of the good that was in it, and because to some extent the two could go together a certain distance. Indeed, as we have hinted, the Church did let herself be too much influenced by philosophical specu-

[1] Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 284.

lations similar to Gnosticism. The explanation why this Gnostic philosophy grew to such proportions, and affected the Church so much, lay in its points of contact with Christianity. They both sought salvation from sin, and the union of man with God; and even the rigorous asceticism after all seemed only a more serious and determined form of Christian morality. The widespread dualism which is seen in so many forms in the ancient world, was due to a religious instinct. The dualism of Greek philosophy, with its attendant ascetic practice, was a protest against the common Greek religion, which deified nature and sanctioned all human impulses as divine; and early Christianity, which had a thousandfold keener moral passion against the impurity of life that was the fruit of pagan nature-religion, naturally allied itself with the higher principle, and was inclined to fall into the same mistake of dualism. The Church did not come out of this struggle without marks of conflict. The victor was affected for good and for evil; and one of the effects, for good and for evil, was the ascetic bent given to the Christian life.

Many times in subsequent movements the Church seems to hover on the brink of this dualism, which so completely sanctions asceticism. Thus, we find something almost like dualism in much of mediæval devotional literature, the same inevitable combination of mystical speculation and practical asceticism. The common depreciating of the body, the despising

it as the seat of sin, are symptoms of an underlying conception similar to the Gnostic. The innate evil of the body as such is often a presupposition, as could be shown by countless quotations from almost any well-known devotional book. 'The devil sleepeth not,' says À Kempis, 'neither is the flesh yet dead; therefore cease not to prepare thyself to the battle.'[1] Or take such a saying as this from the teaching of Brother Giles, one of the companions of St. Francis: 'Our wretched and weak human flesh is like the pig, that ever delighteth to wallow and befoul itself in the mud, deeming the mud its great delight. Our flesh is the devil's knight; for it resists and fights against all those things that are of God and for our salvation.'[2]

Alexandrian thought, which influenced the creed of the whole Church so powerfully, was moved by the attempt to mediate between Jewish Christianity and Greek dualism, and was always inclined to look on the body as a clog hindering the spirit; so that with it the ideal came to be the uprooting of the physical principle of life rather than the sanctifying of it. It was through this strong impact of Gnostic influence that the Church got the decided ascetic bent, which persisted for centuries. Whatever other elements entered into the various Gnostic systems, this one of the inherent sinfulness of matter was always present. This attitude to matter as evil led

[1] *Imitatio Christi*, Bk. II. ch. ix.
[2] *Teaching of Brother Giles*, viii.

some of the later Gnostics to hold Docetic views of Christ's life; for, if matter is evil, Jesus, they held, could never have taken a real body. The earthly body in which He appeared to men could only be an illusion, and His death also only an appearance. From the austerity which we have seen was natural to Christians in face of a corrupt civilisation, we can understand the points of contact such speculations would have with the Christian faith; and the Gnostic heresy would get foothold through the fact that there were groups in the Church from the earliest days, who tended towards a rigid practice of asceticism, making vegetarianism, celibacy, renunciation of worldly goods, rules of life.

We can see, for example, from the Epistle to the Colossians, that St. Paul is there combating false teachers, who seem to have been tainted with what came afterwards to be known as Gnostic ideas. It is not to be supposed that St. Paul was confronted with a completely formulated system. We do not find in the epistle anything like the full Gnostic system, which was a later growth, but we find symptoms similar to those which later on developed into that heresy. The indications are vague, because the system had not been formulated with definiteness as it came to be in the second century. It is rather a tendency of somewhat similar character. Phrygia was a hotbed of such speculations, and gave a suitable climate for the Gnostic leaven, though in all probability, when St. Paul wrote, the

Church was only troubled by a local form of theosophy, mixing the Christian teaching with Jewish and Pagan elements. Orientalism was then, and increasingly came to be, in the air, and there was a ferment of mystical speculation; but whatever the other ingredients, this idea of matter as essentially evil seems the constant factor, and that implied an extreme ascetic morality.

The two chief characteristics of the false teachers at Colossæ certainly seem to have been similar errors of speculation and practical errors. The speculative errors included a worship of angels and intermediate powers, dethroning Christ from at least His unique place, as is shown by such references as, 'Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.'[1] The indications suggest the beginnings of the fantastic Gnostic system, in which the creation of the world was looked on as a series of divine emanations down through an almost endless hierarchy of spiritual powers, in which Jesus took a place, till at last matter, the lowest in the scale, was reached. The practical error grew out of their view of evil as a property of matter, which made asceticism a necessity. So we find them recommending various kinds of abstinence as methods of attaining perfection. St. Paul ironically repeats their formula of prohibition, 'Handle not, nor taste, nor touch.'[2] They recommended austerities to check the indul-

[1] Col. ii. 18. [2] Col. ii. 21, R.V.

gence of the flesh, and part of St. Paul's argument is to point out that such treatment is worthless for the purpose. The severity to the body, which was part of their teaching, failed to lift them out of the range of their dreaded enemy. Their barren struggle against the things which perish in the using, only obscured for them the real problem of sin. A life swayed by a rigorous ascetic motive may have no richness nor depth in it, and be only external conformity to rules—'the precepts and doctrines of men,' as St. Paul calls them. All such externalism in morality defeats itself. St. Paul, as his argument shows, detected the danger in the incipient Gnosticism of the Colossians, a danger which afterwards proved to be a very real one, of the faith becoming a sort of esoteric doctrine full of mystical speculation, and at the same time losing all its ethical hold on life.

Points of contact may also be noted with similar manifestations on the Jewish side in the strange sect of the Essenes, a sect not mentioned in the New Testament, but which influenced the early Church. Practically all our information about them comes from Josephus, and Philo of Alexandria, and a short note by the Roman Pliny. Briefly, the Essenes seem to have been a sect of Jews, practising a form of religious communism with no private property—on one side an exaggerated type of the Pharisee, with scrupulous washings and strict keeping of the Sabbath; but in addition they lived with a strict-

ness unknown to the ordinary Jew, refused to drink wine or eat flesh, refused the use of oil for anointing, excluded women, and prohibited marriage. They had also secret doctrines of angels, and mystical theories of the soul and the world. They too seemed to have believed in the inherent evil of matter, as they denied the immortality of the body, while holding that of the soul. 'Their doctrine is,' writes Josephus, 'that bodies are corruptible and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue for ever, and that they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as to prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward.'[1] This thought of the body as the *prison* of the soul, existing only as a dreadful hindrance to the spirit, is the conception which underlies all asceticism, and means dualism in the world and life. When carried to its logical conclusion, it ends in despair. In the Christian Church it never was quite logical, and could not be, if it were to retain any Christian features at all.

Thus, even in the mediæval Church, Christian asceticism was saved from the worst results of such a system by being looked on as a means to an end —an end which included the ultimate good of the

[1] Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, II. viii. 11.

body itself. The Church never allowed dualism in its creed, and never accepted the idea that matter was essentially evil. This is graphically seen in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, where the greatest intellectual difficulty he had in accepting Christianity was the attraction of Manichæism, a system which assumed the existence of two rival powers antagonistic to each other, from which all created things come. Augustine knew that any such thought was radically opposed to Christianity; and afterwards, when he had rejected the heresy, though naturally he was ascetic by temperament and went as far as any in practical renunciation, yet in the statement of his theology he denied dualism in the world in any form of the theory. This denial, which is essential to all Christian theology, carried with it the conclusion that the natural powers of man, which are so often evil in tendency, can be turned into good, indeed must be. Christian asceticism in its deepest thought renounced the world in order to save it: its purpose was to sanctify the physical nature, and make it an instrument of spiritual good. It was not an escape from the natural, but a conquest of it. Thus, when the ascetic ideal had strongest hold of the Church, the ultimate reconciliation was never quite lost sight of; and this is why the idea of loving service of the world, such as inspired the Franciscans, is a natural development of Christian ascetic piety. Merciless to itself it might be, but tender to others.

We must also remember that the thought of dualism in the world is a very natural mistake, and may be due to a very noble one. Whenever the soul awakes in a man, depreciation of the body is a natural consequence, since in the body the results of sin are most manifest. It is through the body that man is seen to be vulnerable to evil. Physical transgression is palpable and obtrusive, so that the body is recognised as without doubt the *occasion* for sin, giving foothold for evil in the life. It is a simple step from this to the position that it is also the *cause* of sin. To the spiritual man the body seems to humiliate the soul, and the first impulse is to spend the strength in internecine warfare between the flesh and spirit. The Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice at first also seems to countenance this view of the body as fit only to be set aside in the onward march of soul. The Bible, however, never ascribes evil to matter as such, or to body as such ; and the body is consistently regarded as an integral part of man's nature. The New Testament ideal is ever a sanctified body, freed from sin, glorified, not annihilated ; and never thinks of a disembodied state as the ideal, even in connection with its doctrine of the resurrection. The New Testament writers, in ascribing to Christ a flesh like ours, and yet maintaining His sinlessness, show that they did not assume dualism in human nature, nor that evil was an essential part of man's physical constitution. The Christian position is that the body is not a clog on the spirit hindering

its high desires: it is the vehicle by which the spirit works, and the channel through which the spirit is taught and influenced. The very heart of the Christian position is stated by St. Paul when he says in profound words, 'The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.'[1] The incarnation has set the seal of glory on human flesh. The doctrinal value of the incarnation and the death and the resurrection of Christ must lie in the fact that He took on Him real and complete human nature. That Jesus was made man, born of a woman, that He drank of the cup of human life and tasted what it is for a man to die, means dignity for the very flesh. What He has so graced and blessed cannot be called common or unclean.

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 13.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAILURE OF THE ASCETIC IDEAL

It might be thought unnecessary to enter at this late day into an exposure of this ideal, as it may be contended that the world has quietly put it aside as an exploded error. It has been judged in its fullest form in the monastic system, and has been found wanting. It might be dismissed by us as disposed of by the verdict of history, after a long trial, and under the most favourable circumstances. Newman in his *Apologia* describes how Augustine's words, *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*, impressed him when he was taking his momentous step to the Church of Rome; and we may use the same words about the great monastic system, and may think that the whole theory on which it was based is set aside by the practical unanimity of judgment against it which history records; but such might be no more a valid and ultimate argument than it was in Newman's case. Weight must always be given to what seems like the universal assent of mankind, as in some of the instinctive beliefs which rarely fail men. The verdict of history may appear conclusive on the

ascetic theory as found in the monastic system; but history also shows the tendency to revert to seemingly outworn stages, renewing them once more with vigour, though it may be with a difference. Also, the problems of life are never solved once for all: the old foes return with a new face, and each generation has to make its own solutions. Even the corruption of the monasteries, which was so flagrant, and which made an indignant world sweep them away, does not dispose of the theory for which they stood; as abuse is no conclusive argument against the original value of the institution itself. In any case, whether there be a danger of a revival of similar manifestations among us in our modern life or not, the truth, which gave the system its vitality, is no less a truth to-day, and is open to exaggeration and false applications still. It thus remains useful, if not necessary, to notice the defects and temptations of the ascetic ideal.

The ascetic ideal taken by itself results in failure, even more disastrous than the failure of the theory of self-culture; for the latter at least aims at a positive end, while the former spends its strength on a merely negative method. We have admitted that there is truth in both, and that a place must be found for both in our plan of a true life; but, though asceticism may be the nobler fault arising from a passionate longing for purity, the other ideal is the more complete. This can be seen from the fact that

even ascetic practises can only be justified as methods chosen to reach a truer culture. Indeed culture, if it is to be more than an easy acceptance of the natural, must to some extent make use of restraint to achieve its end. Sacrifice is essential for a well-balanced character and life. The scholar must make some sacrifice of bodily health, or at least of bodily pleasure, if only to give him time to study. It is recognised to be justifiable to give up pleasure of sense in the interests of intellectual good, to 'scorn delights and live laborious days' that truth may be reached. It can be even seen to be noble and right to make some sacrifice of mental culture for a larger spiritual good. Sacrifice there must always be, since nothing can be got without it; and the ideal of culture would be a dead-letter without the upward striving. When the lower in any sphere is given up for the higher, we commend the sacrifice, and feel that it is amply justified.

But while culture, rightly viewed, is forced to admit a place for sacrifice, it only throws out into clearer relief the subordinate position of sacrifice as purely a means. Sacrifice, which looks upon the restraint as a good thing in itself, and which is not undertaken explicitly for some other end, is the barrenest and the most dangerous object man can set before him. It is dishonouring both to man and to God; to man, because it means the useless impoverishment of life; to God, because it implies that the mere suffering of body, or the denial of

reason, can in themselves please Him. Yet this is the besetting temptation, which asceticism has never been able to avoid. To elevate self-denial into an end in itself, opens the door to many evils of creed and of life, and degrades religion; and yet to so elevate self-denial into an end, either wholly or partially, is the position of the ascetic ideal. The method insisted on, as can be seen from any book of ascetic devotion, is, Deny yourself every satisfaction, deny the eyes delight in seeing, the tongue the pleasure of speech, the palate what it likes, the ears the music of man and the song of birds, the body all ease and comfort; and the more complete this denial is, the more meritorious is the exercise, and the more pleasing the sacrifice is to God.

The very half truth in it makes its inherent falseness the more dangerous. A religious man must deny himself many things of ear and eye and tongue. He must often renounce pleasure; and all this is true, even to men who have no religious ideal, but who, like the self-contained culturists, have any high purpose at all. We do not need to be told the duty and obligation of self-denial by any anchorite of old, or by the weak devotionalists of to-day, who echo faintly the anchorites' creed without the courage to follow their practice. It comes to every earnest man, and certainly it comes with forceful insistence to every sincere Christian soul, who knows that he must bend to a cross if he would follow his Master. He knows he must give up if he would be true to

himself, as well as true to Him. But even where self-mortification may seem to be most necessary, it must never be for its own sake. Sacrifice can have no justification whatever, and must be cursed with futility, except as it is undertaken for a higher purpose. Self-denial is always a relative thing, either relative to some good of self, or relative to some good of others. In the first case, when it is in some legitimate self-interest, it is designed to minister to some form of culture, some clearer mental enlightenment, or some deeper moral discipline, or some richer spiritual blessing—which means that it is for the sake of man's own best life, for a more attractive development, for a higher culture. Christ's teaching, even in the passages which seem most an encouragement to asceticism, is that it is better to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand than to allow the whole body to perish, that it is therefore for the sake of the larger and higher life. And if any form of self-culture taken by itself fails, as we have shown it does fail, how much more must the ascetic ideal fail, since it is only a means towards a means!

Following on the initial mistake, which elevates what at the best can only be a means into an end in itself, it omits elements from the moral ideal, which are necessary to keep it sane and sweet, such as the place of pleasure. Men have instinctively felt that happiness must somehow be associated with whatever is looked on as the great end of human life;

since so many things in the world are capable of giving pleasure, and even the necessary purposes of nature hold out bribes of pleasure, or at least of freedom from pain. It is, for example, for the maintenance of life that food should be taken, and nature manages to secure her purpose by making it on the whole a pleasure to eat. In various ways pleasure is put before us as a sort of lure to lead us to do certain things, so that it seems natural for man to consider among other things how a certain course will affect his happiness. And though men early discovered that to make pleasure the aim of life was a sure way to deprive it of all true joy, still they have never given up the innate assurance that happiness must at least be included in man's chief end. It throws the whole providence of God into utter confusion to imagine that happiness in itself is evil, and that moral good implies its eradication.

It was the early faith of Israel that righteousness inevitably produced prosperity, that there was complete correspondence between the moral life and the outward government of the world. They looked with assurance to see the wicked wither away, and to see the good man send his roots deep like a tree and spread his branches wide. They expected a happy prosperous life for the man who kept the divine law, and walked in the way of the commandments. One of the keenest problems of the Bible was how to reconcile this seeming axiom of faith with the facts of experience. It is the problem of

the Book of Job, and of some of the finest Psalms,[1] arising from the evident knowledge that often the good man suffers and the evil man prospers. They could not believe that this apparent contradiction could be real; for, if the world is governed in a moral way, it was to be expected that good would invariably be rewarded and evil be punished.

The first intuitive faith that the keeping of the law brought earthly happiness looked too much on the surface; and through the sore struggle to account for the discrepancies men of faith were driven inward, and religion became more spiritual. Yet men have never given up the belief that in some way there is an essential connection between the two. It is an instinct of the heart that happiness and goodness go together, that they *must*, if God be reasonable, and certainly must if He be righteous. It is a commonplace of religious faith that righteousness and blessedness are inseparably united; and indeed all morality, and all law, and all thinking, are based on it. It demoralises both life and religion to believe that God does not desire the happiness of His creatures, just as surely as it demoralises life and religion to imagine that He has no higher aim for them than that they should be happy. It was a wise, as well as a scriptural, answer which was given to the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as to man's chief end, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.' It is not

[1] *e.g.* Psalms xxxvii., xlix., lxxiii.

without reason that spiritual life and blessedness are always in some form joined together; for goodness and happiness were not meant to be divided.

To separate happiness from the moral ideal, or to make happiness itself the ideal, each result in fearful mistake. It does not come within our scope to show the fallacy of the latter of these alternatives, though it is evident that to make happiness the end cuts away the foundation from morality; for it changes law into arbitrary choice according to personal inclination. In practice it leads to Epicureanism, however refined the form may be. We can see what havoc it must make of all the noblest and highest qualities in man, if we say that there is nothing better than happiness, even though we safeguard that by trying to show how much better and more lasting the higher pleasures are than the lower ones. As a matter of experience also it is found that the pursuit of pleasure is doomed to disappointment, and can never escape from what Carlyle calls that inexorable all-encircling ocean moan of *ennui*. 'If you could mount to the stars, and do yacht voyages under the belts of Jupiter, or stalk deer on the ring of Saturn, it would still begirdle you.'[1]

But if it is true that to make happiness the end leads to failure, it is equally true that to leave out happiness from the moral ideal is also failure, and to an earnest man it must mean asceticism. Asceticism looks upon pleasure even in things innocent as

[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*—'Jesuitism' (last page).

sin, and rightly so, if it is not part of the moral ideal for a man. Logically, this would result in the termination of all human society, and indeed of human life itself. Asceticism, which set itself to uproot and exterminate certain natural impulses, could not help looking on pleasure as a lure to trap the unwary soul, and on beauty as a temptation of the devil.

How the thought works out we see from Augustine, whom we quote, because with his keen and bold intellect he unbares the essential principle of ascetic distrust of pleasure as such. In his *Confessions* he discusses the temptations which come to him, in spite of having cut himself off from the world and given himself wholly to God; and among them he tells us his difficulties concerning music. He is half inclined to condemn it in its use in the Church services, because of the pleasure it gives him. 'Sometimes I wish the whole melody of sweet music, to which the Psalms of David are generally set, to be banished from my ears, yea, and from those of the Church itself.'[1] He blames himself for letting the melody please him, and is suspicious of the emotions created by the music. He calls it a gratification of the flesh, that he should find more satisfaction in the divine words when they are sung with a sweet and accomplished voice, than in the ordinary reading of the words themselves. He knows it to be sin, that he should have any such enjoyment. He rather

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. x. chap. xxxiii.

approves of the plan of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who partly avoided the difficulty by a compromise, and made the reader of the Psalm intone with so slight an inflection of voice that it was more like recitation than chanting. Augustine is only kept from condemning Church music altogether, by the memory of how it affected him before he was a Christian, and how it moved him towards religion. His faltering conclusion is, 'Thus I hesitate between the danger of mere enjoyment, and my experience of their wholesomeness; and I am more drawn, though not now declaring an irrevocable opinion, to approve of the custom of chanting in Church, that so by the delight of the ears the weaker minds may rise to the feeling of devotion. Yet when it befalls me to be more moved with the singing than with the words sung, I confess that I sin grievously, and then I would prefer not to hear the chanter.' His dilemma is created by the fact that the music is useful in impressing others to enter religion; otherwise he would condemn it, as far as he is concerned.

It is the same with pleasant odours,[1] though these do not trouble him much, as they do not represent any great attraction; but pleasant sights are a greater difficulty than even the musical temptation, since they are more constant. The eyes love fair and varied forms, and bright and pleasing colours, and the light all through the day suffuses everything, charming him with its varied play, even when he is

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. x. chap. xxxii.

not thinking of it. He resists these seductions of the eyes, though he confesses that often he is ensnared; for 'that corporeal light, of which I speak, seasoneth the life of this world for her blind lovers with an enticing and dangerous sweetness.'[1] And of course the numberless things made by various arts and crafts, if made more beautiful than is necessary, exceeding moderate use and all pious meaning, only add to the enticements of the eyes—to say nothing of pictures and statuary. Augustine, with his strong and spiritual mind, did have a glimmering of the great truth that those beautiful things, which are conveyed through men's souls to the hands of artificers, come from the Beauty Which is above our souls; but his deep-rooted asceticism could not let him rest there in that noble thought, and his last word is that his steps are entangled with these beauties, and he appeals to God to pluck him out.

The same deadly temptation lurks in the curiosity, or appetite for knowing, which he classes as 'lust of the eyes,' since the eyes are chief among the senses as sources of knowledge. This curiosity, which we to-day would honour as the mother of science, is to him full of snares and perils, and it is his joy that he has cut much of it away, and driven it from his heart. He is glad to think that he does not now care to know the transits of the stars, and has ceased to desire the sights of the theatre; but he is not quite

[1] *Confessions*, chap. xxxv.

easy in conscience, since, though he would not go to a circus to see a dog course a hare, yet if by chance he saw it happen in a field, he is not certain but that the sport would divert his mind from some great subject of thought, and he would sin in the inclination of his mind.

Naturally, his difficulty is most of all with the pleasures of the palate. He must eat if he would live; and if he eat he cannot avoid feeling the satisfaction of taste. It is no question with him of gluttony or drunkenness, which would be impossible to him, and which of course he would condemn, as every moralist must, on grounds of excess. He is troubled by the fact that there should be any pleasure at all in such a thing as eating. He wants to eat only for the necessary care of body, for health's sake, that he may do his work; and he finds his very fasting a snare; for after fasting, while he is passing from the discomfort of emptiness to the content of satisfaction, he is only adding to the pleasure of eating. 'And though health be the cause of eating and drinking, yet a dangerous enjoyment waiteth thereon like a lackey, and oftentimes endeavours to precede it, so as to be the real cause of what I say I do, or wish to do, only for health's sake.'[1] God has taught him, he asserts, that he should set himself to take food only as physic, but there is this terrible difficulty of holding the reins of the throat, which would be a simple

[1] Bk. x. chap. xxxi.

matter, if he could only hold them so tight as to dispense with food altogether.

We have illustrated this point at such length from Augustine, because he is so frank in his statement of the difficulties of the ascetic theory, and so courageous in accepting the consequences which the theory involves. We see here the fatal introspection, which ever goes hand in hand with asceticism, and which induces a morbid and unnatural life. Instead of assisting in the task of quelling the senses, it only hinders, for it lays the stress in the wrong place. Instead of freeing the mind from the engrossments of sense, it only clogs it the more, enhancing the powers of the senses. Persistent suppression of our impulses and sensibilities creates a condition of disease. The child, who is ever held down by a system of repression, loses the natural buoyancy of mind, and becomes morbid, living under a leaden sky. This pathetic sight is common enough in child life, due sometimes even to over-education through the folly of guardians, who do not realise that happy play is part of a child's education, and who do not see that the loss of a joyful childhood can be made up by no subsequent advantages, even if their system did give these advantages.

The method of repression in moral discipline, so vividly illustrated by Augustine, often also shows its failure by the terrible reactions which occur. Men like Augustine are saved from such by their

passionate love of God, and by their absorbing work, and by their intellectual activity; but many are the instances of moral relapse in the stories of the desert saints, and of those whose asceticism was even more logical than Augustine's. The very temptations, which drove men to adopt extreme measures for their extirpation, seem to be strengthened by the treatment. Nature revenges herself for the acts of violence done against her. The natural inclinations, which cannot be completely suppressed, are often driven into mean, and sometimes into evil, channels. The attempt to turn the current of Nature back on herself only dams up the waters, to break out somewhere else and devastate the life. The terrible stories of awful fights with devils, and the deadly assaults of the old passions, in the life of St. Anthony and others, illustrate the truth that their method, instead of reducing temptation, only creates it. If Anthony had lived an active life in some worthy work, many of his temptations would never have troubled him at all. Idle self-meditation makes a man brood on his evil thoughts, and chains his mind to them. It was the recognition of this, which is the reason why in all the rules of the great monastic orders labour was enforced.

We also clearly see that a theory like Augustine's, which looks on the ordinary pleasures and enjoyments of life as in themselves sinful, would mean self-murder if carried to its logical issue. To make

pleasure essentially antagonistic to the moral ideal brings life to a standstill. And on the same ground we should as surely starve the mind, or the soul, as the body. Life is not made any easier for us by a general doctrine of self-denial; for the question arises, How far? Where are we to draw the line, if we are to draw any line? Must we only deny our senses what they seem to crave as legitimate satisfaction? If pleasure is a fatal objection, can it logically be limited to the pleasure of sense? Must we not also deny the pleasures of thought to our mind, our intellectual faculties? for sin is as common there as in the body, and is far more subtle. Must we even go further (and if not, why not?), and deny ourselves the very highest things in our nature—affection, conscience, sympathy, the pleasures which undoubtedly result, say from the exercise of benevolence?

The right view of this question of pleasure is the Biblical view, that there is a true and legitimate desire for happiness, provided that if we *will* the end we also will the true means. We need to recognise that happiness is inseparable from character; that is, we must not desire to be happy, without deserving to be happy. 'Morality is properly not the doctrine how we should *make* ourselves happy, but how we should become *worthy* of happiness. It is only when religion is added that there also comes in the hope of participating some day in happiness, in proportion as we have endeavoured

to be not unworthy of it.'[1] Religion thus gives its seal to the natural craving for happiness, and at the same time saves it from the dangers which give excuse for the ascetic distrust of it. Religion points to ethical happiness, the pleasure which flows from moral effort, as distinguished from mere animal enjoyment. Such ethical happiness, infinitely higher as it is than physical pleasure, must not be made the end of life. We are not to seek the highest life for the sake of happiness. Nothing will so quickly kill true religion as to embrace it for the sake of reward; virtue for any kind of loaves and fishes is not virtue made perfect, but only prudential calculation. Morality needs to be free, spontaneous, not blind obedience to a rule on the one side, nor, on the other side, a choice of alternatives based on which is likely to pay best, but willing submission to the dictates of the highest. This is the great truth, which gives grounds for the ascetic distrust of pleasure in itself.

At the same time, virtue alone can bring true and permanent joy. It is an assured truth, as Mill asserts, that the higher pleasures are more satisfying and more enduring than lower ones. Every one able to judge will admit that intellectual and artistic pleasures are of finer quality than any physical enjoyment; and this is equally true of spiritual blessedness. There is a joy of the Lord which is the strength of life; a perfect satisfaction of

[1] Kant, *Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason*, p. 271.

heart, of which the worldling cannot even dream; a fountain of peace and joy, which the broken cisterns of earth cannot give to the thirsty lips that seek them. The Bible is full of Beatitudes, asserting that, while no true self-surrender can be made for happiness, yet self-surrender does open the door to happiness; and that therefore we cannot separate joy from the Christian ideal. The ascetic mistake in this region is an artificial division of human life, which excludes happiness on what is deemed the lower levels as inherently sinful. Christ's teaching, on the contrary, is that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, if we submit to the law of holiness and the law of love, all the other things are added, and take their rightful place. Even the things that the Gentiles seek come, without wasting the life in the vain pursuit of them—'He giveth it His beloved in sleep.'[1] He does not shut the door of the world's beauty and truth on us. He does not condemn as evil the aims which are so common among men, the desire for happiness, the desire for knowledge, the love of beauty and art. He simply says they are not *first*. He says, Seek the highest, and in seeking the highest every true function of life will be performed, and every true instinct satisfied. If we seek the highest, all else worth having is ours; if we seek after God, God's world will not fail us.

The truth of the ascetic position on this question

[1] Ps. cxxvii. 2 (R.V., margin).

is that happiness, either as an ideal for self, or even for others, is not the true foundation of ethics. A man must be willing to do without happiness, must put duty first at all costs, must sometimes choose self-sacrifice so complete that there seems no room for earthly happiness in it. Yet happiness is a principle which cannot be omitted, without perverting our whole view of life, and leading to the false and strained morbidness we have noticed from Augustine's great book. No natural impulse is inherently wrong. It may be out of place, inappropriate in time, diseased in its forms, uncontrolled and lawless in its activities; and for these reasons it needs to be held in the grip of a consecrated will, and it makes demands for self-denial and complete control; but in itself it is not essentially sinful. To hold this is a virtual denial of the divine providence of the world. This is one of the causes of the failure of the ascetic ideal. It is such an attitude, expressed or latent, which has given cause for the reproach that the world should be impoverished, by Christian thought and effort being so much relegated to another sphere than the practical. The reproach has grounds in history from all forms of withdrawal from the world, and all methods of repression used to reach holiness. We must take the side of men of the world in their protest against such an interpretation of the demands of religion, though perhaps for different reasons than theirs. Religion does not look on the

things on the earth as sinful in themselves, even when it points away from them to things above. St. Paul often states his position in such words as 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient (profitable); all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'[1] This is the Christian attitude, which will not be brought under the power of any, and which, in the interests of the soul, will even shrink from no necessary self-denial. While it asserts that the only worthy end for man is one above sense, and sees that a life concerned only with things on the earth is futile, even though it may not be sinful in a gross way; it nevertheless refuses to look upon the work of God's hands as evil. If on the one hand the worldliness, which seeks to fill the deep heart of man with things of sense, which never reaches out hands of desire towards the unseen and eternal, is a tragic failure; so on the other hand the other-worldliness, which flees from the duties and ties of earth, which slips off from the burden of being a man, is no less a failure, though it be in the supposed interests of sanctity.

Another mistake in the ascetic conception of the moral ideal is the thought that abstinence is necessarily a higher virtue than temperance. Abstinence, even from things recognised to be lawful, will often be a man's duty, because of weakness in himself, or

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 12. *Cf.* 1 Cor. x. 23.

because of some higher duty towards others. There will always be room for a self-denial, which men of the world would call quixotic and unnecessary. Complete abstinence is certainly a safer way to pursue in things that are doubtful, either because there happens to be a great deal of evil associated with the particular things good in themselves, or for example's sake, to save the young or the weak from temptation. But it is a mistaken idea of virtue to rank the mere abstinence above a temperate and controlled use of the material. The mere escape from temptation cannot be compared with the virile mastery of the conditions of life. Such an escape may be only a sign of moral feebleness, and of incapacity to keep a true balance amid the difficulties of the world. The temptations involved in the possession of earthly property can no doubt be avoided by giving it away, like St. Anthony; but even the deepest of the temptations may remain if the desire is retained; and it will always be a nobler thing to use property wisely and graciously as a steward of the grace of God, than to bundle over the burden to another. It is in the battle that soldiers are best made, and through struggle that strength is got, and by the stress and strain of life that character is built. Character, like the oak, hardens its fibre in the storm. There may be moral cowardice in what looks like beautiful self-renunciation, the cowardice which is afraid of life and its stern conditions. Milton's noble words are applicable here: 'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered

virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary.'[1] He thinks the poet Spenser a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas; for he makes his true knight Guion, representing Temperance, pass unscathed through all the temptations which assail temperance, the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain.[2]

The evasion of natural responsibilities is not victory; and it will ever remain a higher task to bring the complete round of human experience into the obedience of Christ. To refuse the ties of marriage and those that link us to our fellows, to refuse the obligations of the common business of the world, is indeed to find a certain kind of safety; but it is at the expense of the moral discipline, which these are calculated to afford. We are acted on persistently by the forces of our day, and are held fast in the meshes of the social net, mixed up in our complex civilisation, with the spirit of the world ceaselessly playing on us; but these are precisely the conditions that create character, and that test of what stuff we are made. If we were not so sensitive to our en-

[1] Milton, *Areopagitica*.
[2] *Faërie Queene*, Bk. II. canto 7.

vironment, if we were not so easily affected by the tone and colour of our spiritual surroundings, life would not, it is true, be such a perilous venture for us; but the venture must be made, if character is to be developed and strengthened. Clement, who had in many respects by far the sanest and the most truly spiritual mind of all the early Fathers, appreciated the value of ordinary life as the true sphere of Christian activity. He opposed the tendency of his time to magnify celibacy, and pointed to married life as not only the normal life, which it of course must be, but even the more honourable. 'The genuine Christian has the Apostles for his example; and in truth it is not in the solitary life one shows himself a *man*; but the victory is his, who as a husband and father of a family, withstands all the temptations that assail him in providing for wife and children, servants and substance, without allowing himself to be turned from the love of God. The man with no family escapes many temptations; but as he has none save himself to care for, he is of less worth than the man who has more to disturb him, it is true, in the work of his own salvation, but accomplishes more in social life, and in truth presents in his own case a miniature of providence itself.'[1] It is true that there are cases and times, when a man, who has given no hostages to fortune, who is unhampered by such ties as marriage, may be able to do a special piece of

[1] *Vide* Neander's *Church History*, vol. i. section 3, p. 383 (T. and T. Clark).

work, may volunteer more easily for any forlorn hope, undistracted by the cares and embarrassments involved in all human relationships; and such a time was the early centuries, when the Christian faith sometimes called for the completest sacrifice; but these are cases of practical expediency, and not of ascetic principle.

The deepest idea at the root of asceticism is, as we have seen, the radically false conception of human nature, as a soul degraded by being imprisoned in sinful matter. The attitude is, as Origen put it bluntly, that all the evil which reigns in the body is due to the five senses.[1] From this position it is natural to try to limit the connection, even if it cannot be altogether severed. In practice asceticism confines sin to one or two sensuous acts, and strenuously proceeds to uproot the impulses which produce these acts. It has its origin in facts, the fact of sin, and the duty of self-control; but it takes a materialistic conception of both of these facts. It sees that sin is the ruin of man, but it looks on sin as not essentially a spiritual evil. It sees the need of self-control, but it seeks this by external means, by methods of repression. The false diagnosis vitiates the method of cure. It confuses sin with sense, attributes evil to the animal desires, and naturally proceeds to reduce the connection with sense. It fails, however, to evict sin, because it does not go to

[1] *Omne vitium quod regnat in corpore ex quinque sensibus pendet.*

the source. It does not follow that sin is made less, even when sense is weakened, and when sensuous temptation is immensely limited. The old *roué* has not become virtuous because his passions are burned out. He ceases to commit some of the sins that formerly held him in thrall, but the cessation is merely because his senses have weakened in their relish for those particular sins, not because he is a stronger moral being. Similarly, it might be possible by all manner of self-inflicted austerities to so subject the flesh that a special temptation might even cease, without the process representing any moral advance.

As a matter of fact, however, we do not escape temptation, by cutting connection with the sordidness and grossness of ordinary life. This was the experience of all, that temptation was not shut out by convent bars. Nilus, himself a monk, said of another monk, who to escape inward temptation fled from his cell, and ran about from one place to another, 'He will change his place, but not the anguish of his heart. He will rather nourish and increase his temptations.' The initial thought, that flesh is the seat of sin, can be easily seen to be a fallacy. It cannot be so, since for one thing there are clearly many sins, which are not prompted by the animal nature at all, so that, even if the flesh were beaten into subjection on these points, the great battle against sin could hardly be said to be begun. There would still stand all the sins of the mind, and

the imagination, and subtler spiritual sins, entrenching themselves in the citadel of life. Pride, envy, hatred, for instance, are not touched by the material methods of ascetic treatment. We have to go deeper for the true diagnosis of sin, and deeper also for the true cure. It is like trying to deal with a conflagration by putting out the sparks, without touching the fire, the source of the sparks. Sin is not a physical thing, and its cure cannot be effected by physical means. It is the doom of asceticism that it sets itself to an impossible task.

It is chiefly a failure in method therefore. By using only repression and restraint, it withdraws attention from the true seat of sin, which is the human heart, and transfers it to what is really external to the life. To have as weapons only negative prohibitions, is to fight a losing battle. The ascetic method is but another form of externalism, which is the curse of religion. Though it seems to begin in contempt for the external side of life, as a matter of fact its fundamental mistake is that it exaggerates the external. It sets too much stress on mere surroundings; for true life is possible anywhere, and evil is not confined to particular spots. Temptations, therefore, are not killed by creating a desert, and calling it peace. Humility may be found on the steps of a throne, and spiritual pride can kill the soul of a solitary desert saint, or the hermit on a pillar. It follows that the means employed are futile, being purely negative, an outside method of attack-

ing the problem. It is false to make virtue consist in the mere denial of gratifications which our nature craves; and it is, to say the least, a calamity to look upon religion as a sort of moral police saying, 'You must not do this.' Virtue, it is true, will always have a negative side; religion will always mean self-denial; but that is not the essence of either virtue or religion. The mere thwarting of desire in ourselves, or in others, may mean not a single inch of advance in true virtue or true religion. We might multiply restrictions a thousandfold, and be as far off from the desired goal as ever. The external method of defence is futile, for it can never cover all the ground.

> What boots it at one gate to make defence,
> And at another to let in the foe,
> Effeminately vanquished?[1]

We can see how true this is in other spheres of life, as well as in religion. The ideal of the state is not despotic rule, with men blindly bending to authority, with coercive laws beating back individual action at all points; but a free state, where citizens grow up in political liberty amid free institutions. So also, the ideal of education is not dogmatic teaching, which treats a child as fit only to be hedged round by restrictions, and his mind to be cut and shaped to pattern. It is rather the drawing out of the innate capacity, giving each pupil freedom to grow. Both in the state and in education, however

[1] Milton, *Samson Agonistes*.

perfect they may be, there will be restraint, restrictive laws in the one case, and rules and regulations in the other, which repress wrong tendencies; but these are not the end either of the state or of education, but are merely makeshifts to produce the ultimate freedom.

Failure dogs the heels of every negative method in all regions of life, but its failure is nowhere so signal as in religion. William Blake said in his usual style of striking paradox, 'Men are admitted into heaven, not because they have curbed and governed their passions, or have no passions, but because they have cultivated their understandings. The fool shall not enter into heaven, let him be never so holy.'[1] This is the extreme opposite of the position of the ascetic ideal, the statement of the gospel of culture in bold, defiant outline. The truth of it is that the worth of a life is not a negative, but ever a positive, value. Life cannot reach completion by any system of 'Thou shalt not,' however extended. Life cannot be guided by any system of detailed commandment at all. The area of life is too large to be covered by rules; for there would continually arise something, which could not be included in any commandment. Every ascetic system of thought and practice fails, just because of the external way of approaching the problem, confining life within straight lines, imprisoning it in rules.

Because of this, the failure is more marked when

[1] *Proverbs of Hell*—Appendix to *Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

the experiment is tried on a large scale. It may often seem to succeed with the individual, because with the individual it is usually self-chosen, and therefore carries a certain moral dynamic; but, when applied to public affairs, its failure is instant and sure. Puritanism in England, in spite of its great qualities, and its magnificent services to the community, failed for the selfsame reason, because it was too much a mere negation, not only in its protests against the common enjoyments of men, but because of its aloofness from many essential interests, and its isolation from human history. It revolted men, who were keenly susceptible to beauty, and to the charm and grace of life. It looked with contempt, or with fear, on all natural inclinations, and on the love of the beautiful—or at least gave men the impression that it did. Its attitude was too extreme and uncompromising. It had courage and stern opposition to evil; it hated the levity and frivolity of so many classes at the time, and hated the sins and scandals of both Church and State, which indeed produced Puritanism; but its essential failure was due to the external means it employed. When morality is made to consist in rigid adherence to laws and customs, it ceases to be true morality, and when the strong hand is removed, life bounds back with all the greater recoil. Morality must be a living spring of action, self-engendered and free, or it will decay.

This is well illustrated by the history of all Sump-

tuary Laws, which different States used to pass in a panic at the luxury and licence of life. In Rome, when wealth increased, laws were passed regulating the cost of entertainments, and the number of guests one could invite, but never with any success for the reformation of morals. In England there were many such laws down to the time of the Reformation, regulating the number of courses that were permitted at dinner according to rank and degree, and the kind of dresses people were allowed to wear, also according to rank. The Scottish Parliament did the same for the dress of ladies, quaintly stating that it was for the sake of 'the puir gentlemen their husbands and fathers.' If restraint in dress, and deportment, and manner of living, come naturally from principle, then it is well; but if repression in these things is only forced on people from without, it is neither good political economy, nor good morality. Unless by way of setting a standard, and so gradually creating a public conscience on such subjects, repressive laws really effect nothing. Besides, it is always a practical failure, human nature being what it is. Montaigne's criticism of Sumptuary Laws on this score is a valid one: 'The way by which our laws attempt to regulate idle and vain expenses in meat and clothes seems to be quite contrary to the end designed. The true way would be to beget in men a contempt for silks and gold, as vain, frivolous, and useless; whereas we augment to them the honours, and enhance the value of such things, which surely is

a very improper way to create a disgust. For to enact that none but princes shall eat turbot, shall wear velvet or gold lace, and to interdict these things to the people, what is it but to bring them into a greater esteem, and to set every one more agog to eat and wear them?'[1] It is useless to begin at the circumference of life.

The mistake of all forms of asceticism, both personal and social, is partly, therefore, a mistake as to *where* the denial is needed. Sin is much more than bodily excess; it is not a property of matter, but a condition of soul. Worldliness is not a thing of locality, and purity is not a negative virtue. A man may be in the world and yet not of it; a man may be out of the world and yet of it, akin in spirit, held in its toils. Sin is to be met and overcome at its source, in the thought of the mind, in the imagination of the heart; and this is to be accomplished not by external curbing, but by a new principle of life. Opposed to externalism of morals, the Christian method demands a renewing of will, producing spontaneous moral emancipation. Instead of mere negative prohibitions, it points as the true secret to the purifying of the inner life, raising it into a higher sphere, where the lower temptations can get no foothold. Instead of the negations it presents a positive; instead of rules and precepts of abstinence it offers a vital principle, which will work itself out in all the details of life, and carry its inspir-

[1] *Essays*, chap. xxxiv., 'Of Sumptuary Laws.'

ing force to every region, sanctifying every part, and leaving none as common and unclean. This principle of life expresses itself in the ordinary relations, in the social duties of the family and the state. The Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice even finds its true sphere there, and not in useless asceticism.

Beginning at the centre, the whole circle will be pervaded with good, right to the circumference. 'Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,'[1] is St. Paul's alternative to the fruitless efforts after external holiness. He did call upon his converts as part of the ethical implication of their faith to mortify their members which are on the earth,[2] a word which was often read, or misread, as an argument for various kinds of world-denial and renunciation; but it is no general system of artificial discipline which he commends to them, and no glorification of the desert as a school for saints. He goes on to describe what he means, giving instances of the kind of self-discipline required. It is not a statement that ordinary life is evil, and that all the relations and environment in which we are placed in the world are evil; it is a call to resist whatever in a man's life is opposed to the Christian faith. He specifies some of the things in those who have been taken out of paganism, which need mortification, 'fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness.' Repression, renunciation, there must always be. A man must have his nature under the curb, and must

[1] Gal. v. 16. [2] Col. iii. 5.

master his soul. Every life knows best where the struggle must be. To one it may be the torment of some passion, which needs constant restraint; to another it may be temper, or pride, or a tongue hard to be controlled; the besetting sin of another may be sloth, or sluggishness of nature. It is there, at the point of least resistance, the true self-denial must be applied. But the method which the Apostle gives as the true way to mortify the evil desires, is to set the affections on higher things.[1]

Growth, not restraint by itself, is the true method; not by crushing the lower, but by quickening the higher. The extinction of evil by a process of eviction is a failure, because even if it were possible there is no security against the seven worse devils taking up abode in the swept, and garnished, but empty room. The spiritual is attained, not by unnaturally crushing the natural, but by disentangling the natural from what is evil in it, and rising above it, so that the higher becomes the natural. The way to overcome is not by a policy of repression, negativing every impulse as it arises, denying every craving, rooting out every desire. Even as strategy there is a better way, by turning the enemy's flank. It is vain to try to kill evil thought, by striving to empty the mind of all thought: it is at least a more hopeful method, by fostering every thought of good, by filling the mind with whatsoever things are lovely, and true, and good, and pure. It is not the curb we need so much

[1] Col. iii. 2.

as the guiding rein. Even as a policy we know something of the expulsive power of a new affection, in Dr. Chalmers's great phrase. A noble attachment will give a man power to repress the base, as no mere coercive means will do. The higher motives, if we would only believe it in dealing with other men as well as with ourselves, are always the strongest. *Esprit de corps* will do more for a regiment than the lash. A high sense of honour will save a man from disgrace, as no fear of punishment can. Christ's method in all His teaching was not restriction and negation. He often showed the futility of cleansing the outside of the cup and the platter, and denounced all the external methods of seeking holiness. Inwardness is the word which best describes His method. He again and again pointed to the heart of man, as the source of sin, and the sphere of holiness, and the field of struggle; for out of it are the issues of life.

In the next two chapters other indications will be given of the inherent weakness of the ascetic ideal, notably that it creates an artificial distinction in the ethical standard, making two grades with two rules of morality. But its failure is already sufficiently made evident for the reasons given above—first, that it raises into an end what can only be justified as a means; secondly, that it leaves out an essential element of the moral ideal, happiness, and is therefore led to look upon pain as in itself good; further, that it makes abstinence a higher virtue than tem-

perance, and the evasion of natural responsibilities more worthy than the mastery of the temptations involved in them; and lastly, that it is on that account a mistake in method, spending its force on external and repressive rules. The conclusion we have so far arrived at is that of the two ideals, that of culture is essentially higher than that of restraint, in spite of the elements of nobility in the latter; since culture is at least a positive end, and can be made to include restraint, indeed must to some extent use it as a means to reach its full fruition.

CHAPTER IX

THE MEDIÆVAL CONCEPTION OF SAINTHOOD

A FURTHER evidence of the harmful legacy from the ascetic ideal is to be found in the Church idea of a saint, and all that sprang from it, both of a false standard of holiness, and of errors of creed and worship. The primary idea of the word saint means pure, clean, ceremonially or morally consecrated to God. In the Old Testament it is applied to Israel as a people, as 'Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy.'[1] In the New Testament it is applied to the whole Christian Church, to the members of the Christian community generally. It is assumed of all who profess the Christian name that they are consecrated to God, and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It sets a standard for the Church, anticipating the ultimate result, as it were. The Church is counted holy, and at the same time called to be holy; consecrated, and by that summoned to the consecrated life. We cannot overestimate what this meant to the early Church as a motive for her members to realise their exalted

[1] Psalm cxxxii. 9.

ideal. In the New Testament the word 'Saints' is never used exclusively of certain select people, a sort of election within the election, a few eminent superior Christians who have outshone their fellows in attainments and sanctity. It always expresses the commonalty of the faith, and is applied, as St. Paul often does, to the whole Christian community. The very title contained a moral dynamic, fit to give all members of the Church pause, and to make them inquire whether they were living up to their name, whether it was an accurate definition and description of them. It made holiness an essential note of the true Church, a characteristic by which it is to be tested and known. A synonym for the Church which has ever been accepted as a fair definition is 'the Saints,' emphasising holiness as a requisite. The righteousness of Christ's disciples must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who made religion itself consist of righteousness.[1] The work of Christ was to present His people holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable.[2] The name by which God is known is the Holy One, and His people are the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.[3] It follows that mistaken ideas of what holiness is will mean mistaken ideas of what constitutes sainthood.

Very soon in the history of the Church a process set in, which despoiled the word of its meaning, and also robbed the thought of its power. It came to mean the exceptional in many ways; and so tests of

[1] Matt. v. 20. [2] Col. i. 22. [3] Heb. iii. 1.

sainthood were introduced, which in many periods excluded all believers whose lives, sometimes for conscience' sake and because of the claims of duty, could not be run on the lines of approved sainthood. The Church conception of a saint became limited and defined to a class, and was exclusively referred to a select few. A saint came to mean one who was eminent for the Christian qualities, for holiness of life, and steadfastness to the faith. There was even a further degradation of the idea and the word, when it was narrowed still more to mean one who was officially recognised and canonised by the Church. Ecclesiastical usage early restricted it to those exceptional in their virtues, who displayed the Christian qualities in a heroic degree. This limitation of the word is not confined to the Roman Catholic Church, as there is a common use of it among Protestants, which has the same effect. By saint is often meant a certain peculiar type of faith and character—pietists, mystics, and men who show a weak aloofness from the great interests of the world, and from the great fight of faith with the world. Thus it is sometimes used with a sort of sneer in it, as if it invariably implied weakness of some kind, the unpractical feckless man, too good for the world ; and even sometimes the word connotes hypocrisy. It is a terrible abasement of a noble word, and is caused by a similar process, which produced its degradation in the early centuries. The root of both the Roman Catholic and the modern abuse of the word is an unspiritual

idea of holiness, and therefore an unspiritual idea of the method of attaining holiness. In both it is assumed to be best attained by withdrawal, either complete or partial, from the world. The method, of course, finds its completest form in the mediævalism of the Roman Church; but many of the modern pietist conceptions of a saint are coloured by the same idea, and only differ from the other by not being carried out to their logical conclusion.

The origin of the defined and limited class of saints in the early Church was very natural. It was natural for the Church to look back to the Apostles of Jesus, who had known Him in the flesh, as belonging to a special and privileged class, with special claims to be called saints. Then, in the hard times of persecution when the Church had to go through the fire, it was natural that all who suffered death for Christ's sake should be admired and venerated. They had sealed their faith with their blood. As a matter of course, all who suffered as martyrs were put on the list of saints. The first hagiology was a martyrology; this was so especially the case that the word martyrology is still used in ecclesiastic language for the list of the saints, though in later times many were canonised who had not died as martyrs. The same was true of the Confessors, who, though they were not actually put to death, suffered torture and imprisonment, and refused to deny their faith. Ordinary flesh and blood admired such heroic adherence to Christ, and

men assumed that these noble sufferers must be of a stronger fibre, with a greatness of faith which lifted them out of the common ranks. The very humility of the Church made ordinary believers set up as better than themselves others, who were thus eminent in their piety, more remarkable in the steadfastness of their testimony, and more useful in their services.

In the primitive Church it was customary to make much of the memory of their martyrs, the holy dead who would not deny their Lord. They kept the anniversaries of their death, and took communion on these days. Each Church had its own martyrs and confessors, the men who had worshipped with them and had departed in the odour of sanctity, and these were lovingly remembered. It was merely a grateful commemoration, and was of practical use as an incitement to emulate the example of pious and holy men. Eusebius quotes in his *History of the Church* an interesting letter from the Church of Smyrna, which shows the natural veneration for a martyr, and also reveals that they were well aware of the danger of Saint-worship, by the way they guard themselves in explaining in what sense they display respect and veneration to the relics. The letter gives an account of the martyrdom of their bishop, St. Polycarp, and then goes on: 'Our subtle enemy, the devil, did his utmost that we should not take away the body, as many of us wished to do. It was suggested that we should desert our crucified

Master and begin to worship Polycarp. Fools! who knew not that we can never desert Christ, who died for the salvation of all men, nor worship any other. Him we adore as the Son of God; but we show respect to the martyrs, as His disciples and followers. The centurion, therefore, caused the body to be burned; we then gathered his bones, more precious than pearls, and more tried than gold, and buried them. In this place, God willing, we will meet and celebrate with joy and gladness the birthday of this martyr, as well in memory of those who have been crowned before, as by his example to prepare and strengthen others for the combat.'[1] We see from this most interesting letter how natural it was that a Church should hold festival on a martyr's birthday, which was counted the day of his martyrdom, as being the day he entered into fulness of life; and how natural it was also that the relics should be lovingly preserved and treasured, even put in their most sacred place, under the altar, as became the common practice in the Church. It is to be expected that their fellow-believers should hold in deep affection the mortal remains of a heroic brother. In course of time what was a natural and beautiful instinct became degraded. From this human root grew all the abuses which are associated with saint-worship—the superstition, the miracle-mongering, the fetich of saints' bones and relics, which has made the very word saint an offence in

[1] Baring-Gould, *Lives of the Saints*, vol. i., Intro. p. xii.

the ears of many. The good custom corrupted the Church.

It is not necessary to trace the steps of the descent, down to the belief in the magical efficacy of touching some sacred relic. The eminent Christians, who were sainted, were at first held up for the exhortation of all the people, that their good example might fire them with emulation of their zeal and faithfulness; and the step from that to the worship of the Saints was not difficult to take in these days, when the hardest thing for the Church to combat was the pagan tastes and superstitions of a great mass of the population. We see the good of it, and the danger, in a remark of St. Augustine: 'The Christian people celebrate the memory of the martyrs with religious solemnity, both to excite to imitation, and that they may become fellows in their merits and be assisted by their prayers.' The catalogue of those who had claims to sainthood grew larger as the years passed, and it was impossible even to read all the names on the days set apart, when the Church thanked God for the Martyrs and Saints, who had witnessed a good confession. So, gradually the whole year was mapped out, and the saints were named on their special days. To begin with, each Church of a district made its own saints, and commemorated its own blessed dead, those whom they knew to be eminent for sanctity. Each bishop had the power to canonise a local saint or martyr, but in the

twelfth century these local lists were closed, and the Pope claimed the sole right of creating saints in this ecclesiastical sense. According to the laws of canonisation, which hold good in the Roman Church to-day, there must be, in addition to heroic virtue, evidence of the saint having performed miracles in confirmation of his sanctity.

But worse even, if possible, than all the abuses which crept into the Church through saint-worship is the degradation of the word Saint itself. It began by the removal of the idea of sainthood from the ordinary lives of ordinary Christians. It was taken away as an ideal for all, and ultimately was made the mark of a special and artificial type of goodness. What we have already seen of the origin of the ecclesiastical saint explains how this came about. We saw how naturally the Martyrology set the standard. The Martyrs were canonised, because of their suffering unto death for the name of the Lord. Suffering came to be the badge of the saint; and so when the days of martyrdom passed, other kinds of suffering took the place of martyrdom as tests of sainthood. When the Christian faith was recognised by the Empire, so that persecution ceased and the opportunities of martyrdom were reduced, the idea became prevalent that there was no longer scope in the world for the full exercise of Christian virtue in a heroic degree. The Confessors who had suffered were held in

higher esteem than ever; and the standard then set up was transferred to the self-inflicted austerities of those who sought to display exceptional virtue. Men martyred themselves, and the ideal Christian life came to be a life of asceticism, however empty of moral significance these ascetic practices happened to be. Fasting, maceration, physical self-mortification, voluntary privation, became the marks of a saint. The anchorites were considered by the people more holy than the cœnobite monks who resided in monasteries, because they carried the principle of renunciation furthest. If renunciation is in itself good, and even represents the highest life, then of course the solitary ascetics, who renounced not only the world but the society of their fellows, have reached a higher point of perfection.

We find all kinds of artificial self-torture among these, as if they competed with each other in discovering new kinds of cruelty against their own persons. Many of the Saints, whose names have been included in the great catalogue, have little about the record of their lives that is really noble and beautiful and Christlike. Some of the Lives of the Saints are but pitiful, and even disgusting, reading. It is true that in a profligate time, when the world seemed drowned in luxury, the spectacle of men, willingly inflicting the most terrible severity on themselves, may have done good by creating a startling sense of contrast. Any good, however, that might have accrued from such was a thousand-

fold counterbalanced by the immense evil produced in the Church by the thought that the supposed holiness, which gives a man a title to be a saint, has little to do with ordinary life. Nothing could make up for the loss which came through the true ideal of the Christian life being obscured. Among the hermits of Egypt there was displayed a remarkable ingenuity in the different forms of austerity, and in the kinds of penance they imposed on themselves sometimes for very trivial faults, all being the fruit of the notion that suffering in itself was good. St. Macarius of Alexandria, so called to distinguish him from another St. Macarius of Egypt, was one day stung by a gnat in his cell, and he killed it. Then, regretting that he had allowed himself to be irritated by an insect, and that he had lost an opportunity of enduring mortification calmly, he went to the marshes of Scete and stayed there six months suffering terribly from the insects, as if they had known he had killed a brother gnat. When he returned he was so disfigured by their bites that he was only recognised by his voice. When a younger disciple once asked leave to drink a little water because of the parching thirst, the old hermit, under whose care and tuition he had put himself, told him to be satisfied with resting for a little in the shade, and to encourage him said that for twenty years he had never once eaten, or drunk, or slept, as much as nature demanded. St. Anthony at one period went to the tombs, and leaving instructions with an

acquaintance to bring bread at intervals of many days, he entered one of the tombs, and shutting the door upon himself remained there alone.

Some of the austerities were grotesque in the extreme, though, if we grant the assumption that a saint is to be made through self-inflicted suffering, we cannot wonder at eccentric forms of pain being sought after. Among the Celtic Saints barbarities were common: one would stand naked in ice-cold water till he recited the psalter; another would sleep among corpses and suspend himself on the points of sickles placed under his armpits; another would keep a stone in his mouth throughout Lent. Endless instances could be given of how the whole conception of sainthood became degraded. One of the first disciples of Anthony was Paul the Simple, who came at the age of sixty as a candidate to adopt the monastic life. Anthony, to test his qualifications, and thinking him too old to begin, tried to disgust him by the severity of the discipline. He set Paul to pray outside his door, and told him not to desist till he was released. He prayed on through the blazing sun, and through the night, as rigid as one of the date-palms of the desert. He then brought him into his cave, and gave him some platting work to do, and when it was done rebuked him for doing it badly, and bade him undo it all again. Anthony then brought bread and called the famished candidate to supper, but as grace before meat, he recited twelve Psalms and twelve prayers to try his patience,

and then took away the bread, saying that looking on it would suffice for supper. As Paul did not murmur at even this new version of a Barmecide feast, we are told that Anthony saw that he was qualified to be a monk.[1]

This conception of the saintly life as implying self-mortification is not confined to the first early hermits; it has persisted throughout the centuries, though in the finest and noblest of the canonical saints it has been modified by never being chosen as a good in itself. But right through the Roman Calendar it is always considered a great feature of sainthood, that men and women should have shown their contempt for the world by the practice of austerities. In every country and every age there are saints who have been canonised seemingly for no other reason than that they have emulated the pains of the early confessors. The Blessed Marianna of Quito in Peru, who lived in the seventeenth century but was only beatified in 1850 by Pius IX., seems to have bought her title to sainthood by mortification. She used to sleep in a coffin or on a cross, and on Fridays she hung for two hours on a cross, suspended to it by her hair and by ropes. Another saint of the same period in Peru, St. Rose of Lima, set herself to imitate St. Catharine of Siena, fasted like her, wrapped chains round her body, had a crown of thorns which she placed daily on her head, and had it struck so as to wound her forehead.

[1] *Lives of the Saints*, vol. iii. p. 114.

This whole conception which colours the story of so many saints is due to a false and mischievous view of the meaning and value of pain. It is an inevitable temptation of asceticism, that it can hardly fail to put value on suffering for its own sake. Sometimes there is lurking at the bottom of it the thought of its being an expiation, and sometimes that it is a purifying process; but these are much higher and less dangerous than the useless self-sacrifice, which looks upon pain as in itself a good. It sets a false standard, which vitiates true morality, though we recognise the element of truth in it. There is a heart of good in things evil; and it is not difficult to see how penance grew to such lengths in the Church. Christians early learned the deep spiritual value of trial, and from experience they could testify that good did come out of seeming evil. All the sad experiences of life, which come as fresh food for suffering, become also occasions for triumph, ever more fruitful of renewed strength, and hope, and peace. They learned to glory in tribulations, knowing, as they daily discovered, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts. From this root of truth came the false doctrine of penance, that men should *make* trials for themselves, which is always a dangerous experiment, and can hardly escape the temptation to value the form of discipline for its own sake.

The doctrine of the cross is sometimes stated as if there were in itself a purifying quality in pain, and even as if God took pleasure in our agony, and asked for mutilation of body or mind as the necessary way of pleasing Him. It is not merely that this leads to mere sentimentalism in many, who speak of renunciation when there is no real sacrifice underlying it. We just need to think of the amount of spurious mysticism, the unreal sentiment in much devotional phraseology about self-crucifixion, to realise the temptation on this side. But worse than that even is the thought of God as a sort of Moloch, who takes delight in seeing our children pass through the fire. It is a pagan thought, that mere suffering is pleasing to God, and is blessed to the soul. The prophet denounces the idea that God requires of men burnt-offerings, or such a sacrifice as their first-born for their transgression; and points them to a free and joyous life of justice, and kindness, and a humble walk with God. There are tragic and terrible aspects of life, that seem sometimes almost to justify the extremest attitude of asceticism; but life as God gave it is a good thing with its own joy and beauty. Christianity has often been called a religion of sacrifice and sorrow, of blood and tears; and it is profoundly true; but it is not true in the sense sometimes meant. Christ never looked upon pain as a good thing, as is so often done by sentimental devotionalism. To Him it was an evil thing to be banished, one of the baneful brood of sin, with which He waged

warfare. He never took upon Himself any needless pain; He manufactured no forms of self-denial, and chose no artificial deprivations. He was no martyr by mistake. Men have sometimes expatiated on the physical pains of the crucifixion, and have attempted to estimate the spiritual pains that broke the Saviour's heart; and have in it all lost sight of the real point of emphasis, that the self-emptying, the sacrifice, the cross, are all to be interpreted by love. And many who have sincerely desired to follow Jesus, have done so by various forms of self-inflicted penance, seeking to imitate Him in an external way; whereas it might be possible to have the imitation carried to such complete detail as to include the very cross itself, and yet there be no meaning, no sacrifice in it, and the whole result a ghastly failure.

There is no merit in pain in itself, and no moral value in suffering, and no virtue in the cross in itself. Pain is often, it is true, a 'hound of heaven' to a good man, driving him to spiritual ends; but an evil man has his share of pain, and remains evil. Spiritually, it all depends on the way it is accepted and used. 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted,' said the Psalmist, 'that I might learn Thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word';[1] but often affliction only degrades and hardens. Pain is nothing in itself. Mere tribulation, unsanctified to the soul that suffers, is not a blessing but a curse. The furnace

[1] Psalm cxix., verses 67 and 71.

without this result only consumes the heart, burns away the life into charred dust. A man may go through the fire unpurified, and taste the chastisement of life without the love in it, and be made only more hard and rebellious by every stroke on the anvil. There is no failure of life so terrible as this, to have the pain without the lesson, the sorrow without the softening; and yet it is common enough. And if this is true of the inevitable affliction which comes to all without seeking it, it is also true that the pain of any voluntary self-denial in itself has no magical merit. It may indeed have a moral value, in being a test of the constancy of soul which occasioned the denial. It may be a proof of the higher love, and may at least show that it is more than an emotion. Still, it must be insisted that mere idle self-denial is of no value.

It is very important that we should have a consistent attitude towards pain, and perhaps here as elsewhere the rule *in medio tutissimus* is a good one. There may be a weak dread of pain, which leads to all forms of moral cowardice, and which would make physical comfort the chief end of life; but, on the other hand, to look upon pain as anything but an evil is to set a false standard for self, and to give an opening for cruelty towards others. It was a similar mood to this last, which inspired the opposition to the use of chloroform, which Sir James Simpson had to encounter; some objectors holding that pain was of God's appointing,

and that it was a species of presumption to seek to mitigate it. In the literature of the canonical saints this endurance of bodily pain is enlarged on, till the chief mark of sainthood came to be suffering, and human life was put out of perspective. In the ordinary conduct of life there are plenty opportunities for endurance, and patience, and true self-denial; and these fine qualities are always found in every noble life. Courage in the face of danger, resignation before calamity, endurance in the path of duty in spite of any suffering that may be involved—these will always command the admiration of men; but empty suffering, with no necessity to explain it, or no high end to dignify it, is without moral contents. The mere giving up, with no purpose and no large reason, is useless. That is to look upon self-denial as a fetich, as if God could be pleased by pain; and this is at the bottom of so much mistake in the history of the Church, and of so much false devotion to-day. It is a wrong conception of God, to think His favour depends on the infliction of some sort of painful deprivation on self; as if even He could be bribed by self-torture.

It must never be forgotten that all our Lord's pains came to Him in His ministry, in His service, in the path of duty; and they were all inspired, and glorified, by love. This is why Christianity is a religion of joy, as well as of sorrow; because it is a religion of love. From one point of view the life of Jesus was an easy, simple, natural, joyous, instinc-

tive life; and yet from another it was a stern, strenuous, and even a stricken life. He, who was pre-eminently the Man of joy, who at the last spoke of giving His joy to the disciples, was also the Man of sorrows; and the source of His joy and of His sorrow was the same. They are both the fruit of love. The joy of love is a fact, and so also is the sorrow of love. It is profoundly true that

> The mark of rank in nature
> Is capacity for pain.

That is because it is capacity for love. Vicarious suffering is a fact of life, and cannot be expelled from life, till love is expelled. We cannot care greatly for the highest interests of another, without bearing his infirmities, and taking on his sicknesses, nay, even bowing to the burden of his sins. To see how true and how universal this vicarious suffering is, we need only look around—the shepherd and his lost sheep, the tender picture Jesus drew of how the shepherd thinks not of those safe in the fold but of the one strayed silly sheep, and goes out into the wilderness to find it: a mother and her cripple child, the gentlest-tended, the best beloved of all the family, as she takes the very infirmities on her heart: a father and his prodigal son, with a keener sorrow and anguish of soul than even he can suffer in the far country though he perish with hunger. The hunger, which can be appeased with the husks the swine did eat, is nothing to the heart-hunger at

home. Love's sorrows are as true as its joys; and yet the love transmutes the sorrow into something passing rich and strange, as with the Master Himself, of whom we read that He for the joy set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame. Sacrifice is of the very essence of love, but without love there is no sacrifice. All pains and self-denials are barren and dangerous self-deceptions, if they are not prompted, and inspired, and imposed by love. Only love's own royal hand can make the thorns into a crown. It is false therefore to say that a life is to be measured by loss or by pain: it can only be measured by love. That at least is how it will be measured and judged one day.

A further and even more serious evil, affecting not the individual merely, but the whole conception of the Christian life, was created by the degradation of the word saint, as solely the privilege of the ascetic. The strange division of the Christian life into two grades began, which exists to this day in the Roman Catholic Church, that there are two classes of believers with two standards of morality. The foundation of the error is the belief that at bottom the Christian faith is a world-renouncing creed, and that those, who would perfectly fulfil the word of Christ, must give up the world in the ascetic sense. This practically narrowed itself down ultimately to a question of the celibate or the married life. The theory is that there is a loftier stage of Christian life,

possible only to those who live unmarried and as far as possible apart from the world. The monastic life was called the angelic life.[1] The words 'religion' and 'religious' are always used by mediæval writers in the sense of one who has embraced the monastic life, as can be seen from such beautiful books as the *Fioretti* of St. Francis, or the *Imitatio Christi*, where asceticism is touched with a sweet and gentle tenderness, that makes them perennially attractive. The 'religious' are always those who have left the business of the world to seek holiness in seclusion. This is still the ecclesiastical use of the word, as for example in the common phrase 'to enter religion,' meaning to take the vow of some monastic order, or the equally common phrase 'his name in religion is ——.' A 'religious' in the Roman Catholic sense always means a monk, or friar, or nun.

The influence of Greek thought, as seen in the Alexandrian theology, helped to create the distinction we are noticing. That theology, which laid so much stress on knowledge,[2] tended in itself to make two ranks of Christians, with two different standards of virtue—the Christian sage and the simple believer. The one could enter into the mysteries of the faith, could read the symbolism in nature, and the allegory in history and in religious interpretation, of which that school was so fond; the other had to accept results, and receive the teaching, and live by simple faith. These two tendencies, one ascetic and the

[1] ἀγγελικὴ διαγωγή. [2] γνῶσις, ἡ θεῖα σοφία.

other intellectual, were combined in this way, that the Christian sage was recognised as the man who gave himself up to the life of contemplation, and cut himself off from the entanglements of the earthly relations. The superior virtue of the sage was evidenced by his contempt of the ordinary comforts of life. But as this superiority was impossible for all believers, since, if followed by all, it would bring the Church to an end, a place was left in the Church for those inferior persons, who were content with the lower kind of life.

This ascetic division of the moral law, however, was not allowed to grow without powerful protest. Clement of Alexandria opposed the tendency to elevate the ascetic and celibate life above that of the ordinary Christian living in the common way in the world. He pointed to the inward and the spiritual; and declared that humility is shown, not by castigation of body, but by gentleness of disposition. True abstinence was of the soul, and referred not merely, as asceticism implied, to bodily pleasures. The business of the world should be conducted in an unworldly way; and this was the task of Christians. Still, in spite of such protests, the opposition between the ascetic and the common Christian grew, and the cleavage widened.

The Roman Catholic theory of Christian morals is still that of these days, that there is a higher and a lower morality; the ascetic type being the true perfection of Christian life, the other a kind of com-

promise, necessary for less strenuous people. There are the perfect Christians, and the common Christians, two grades, with necessarily two standards of morality, that of the religious orders, and that of secular Christians. This is inevitable in a Church which claims universal sway, and yet binds itself to an ascetic creed as at least the highest manner of life. Renan accepts this as the logical conclusion of Christ's teaching; for of course it suits his purpose to assume that what he found in the Roman Catholic Church was the New Testament position. He says: 'Perfection being placed beyond the ordinary conditions of society, and a complete Gospel life being only possible away from the world, the principle of asceticism and monasticism was established. Christian societies would have two moral rules: the one moderately heroic for common men, the other exalted in the extreme for the perfect man, and the perfect man would be the monk, subjected to rules which professed to realise the Gospel ideal. It is certain that this ideal, if only on account of the celibacy and poverty it imposed, could not become the common law.'[1] He pushes this argument as conclusive against the faith, if judged by common sense. The argument is indeed conclusive, if he could prove the premise, that such a division of the ethical standard is sanctioned by the New Testament. Renan certainly states a fact of Church history, that such a division was actually made. The result was that

[1] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, chap. xix.

celibacy and renunciation were pointed to as essential requisites for the highest Christian attainment. They were not made necessary for salvation, that is for bare salvation, but necessary for a high place in the Kingdom. This division inevitably did mean, as Renan asserts, a double morality with two moral rules, one for common mortals, the other for perfect men who professed, and alone could profess, to realise the Gospel.

This is absurd as logic. If voluntary celibacy and renunciation of the world are necessary for Christian perfection, then it must be a rule for all. There can be no exceptions. It cannot be left optional that a Christian should choose a lower line of life than Jesus asked for; and if abstinence is the higher virtue, it is incumbent on all. Morality comes always with a categorical imperative. It ever comes as 'Thou must, thou shalt,' never as 'Thou mayest.' It is not a counsel, but a command: it states a law. The only logical position is the position of the New Testament, which never once hints at such compromises, but speaks of all the Church as called to be saints; and if that implies an ascetic life, as the Church of Rome asserts, then it is bound to insist on the same moral standard being imposed on all. The fact that this is impossible, if the world is to continue at all, is no reason for moral compromises, but might be a fit reason for considering the fundamental position, and for examining its truth.

If this division is absurd as logic, it was also un-

speakably evil as practice. It is not necessary to stop to speak of all the evils which resulted—indeed to do so would be to traverse the whole Christian centuries. We have already seen that, since saints were supposed to be a different order of being from ordinary believers, this led to saint-worship, and its kindred superstitions. The theory of 'good works' was a further conclusion which followed. For, whatever might be the case with the common Christian living under the common code of morals, those who fulfilled all righteousness after the perfect pattern, not only did not need a Redeemer in the same sense as the others, but had even a stock of merit over and above through their refined sanctity. All the errors and abuses, which blossomed from the doctrine of good works, down to the scandalous sale of indulgences, which roused Luther and precipitated the Reformation, grew from this root.

The practical effect also on the Christian life was disastrous, and for both parties, both for those on the higher plane and those on the lower. Men, who were in earnest after holiness, were put on a false trail, and were given a life to live, where a balance and completeness of Christian character were made well-nigh impossible. The distinction, which set them up on a pinnacle, created often, as we find in Church history, a spiritual pride and self-righteousness, which destroyed the very purpose of sanctification the system was meant to assist. This temptation to spiritual pride is one which besets all

religion which makes bodily penance a rule of life, and we see it illustrated again and again in the history of hermits and monks. Luther unbares the religious source of the temptation, going to the root of the disease: 'All the priests, monks, and hermits, that live in their cloisters (I speak of the best of them) repose their trust and confidence in their own works, righteousness, vows, and merits, and not in Christ.' [1] This at least is the temptation, and when it is given way to, it results in the most offensive form of pride. The greater the appearance of renunciation, the greater grows the temptation.

The story of the early desert-saints is full of illustrations of the lengths to which pride sometimes carried men who had renounced the world. It led some monks to think that they were superior not only to ordinary men, which was natural enough with their standards; but pride often made them think themselves superior to the ordinary means of grace, and caused them to refuse to take part in communion as being unnecessary for them. Some of them imagined themselves honoured with special revelations, leading to the most eccentric vagaries. Sometimes, on the other hand, we find in the records the self-same pride showing itself in grotesque and exaggerated humility, in unreal self-disparagement, in self-denunciation about trifles, a mood which is not absent in some forms of present-day religion also. We can understand the temptation to pride in a man

[1] Luther, *Com. on Galatians*, v. 2. *ad loc.*

like Simeon Stylites, whose extraordinary self-torture not only set him apart from others, but also impressed thousands to come and get his blessing. Tennyson in his poem[1] refers to this subtle temptation—

> Am I to blame for this,
> That here come those that worship me? Ha! ha!
> They think that I am somewhat. What am I?
> The silly people take me for a saint,
> And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers:
> And I in truth (Thou wilt bear witness here)
> Have all in all endured as much, and more
> Than many just and holy men, whose names
> Are register'd and calendar'd for saints.

Legal morality always ends in self-righteousness. Our Lord makes the Pharisee of the Parable say in self-satisfied assurance, 'I fast twice in the week,'[2] making a merit in the discipline. Those who, like St. Simeon Stylites, pushed the physical treatment of the soul to its utmost extreme, often also show temptations created by their way of life, narrowness of mind, self-will, presumption, zeal without knowledge, all due to lack of culture and disregard of all considerations except the one aim. It is to be expected, for example, that we should find among the crowd of monks who followed St. Anthony's example, fanatical fury, which ambitious men like Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, utilised for their purposes, as Kingsley illustrates with historical accuracy in *Hypatia*. Many of the first hermits and monks were noble men absorbed with a passion for holiness,

[1] *St. Simeon Stylites.* [2] Luke xviii. 12.

but when it became almost a fashion, many, without the inward strength for the life and without the deep spiritual impulse, crowded to the desert monasteries, with the result that the whole life became degraded. Pride, mental disorders, insanity, self-mutilation often to the extent of suicide, resulted; and sometimes violent reaction to unbridled licentiousness.

Apart from such dreadful excesses, which indeed were only possible when the ascetic theory was carried to its furthest as implying solitude, yet the same temptation of pride is seen in the exclusiveness and almost contempt for Christians of the lower order, incident on the division of two grades of which we are speaking. We can see from a casual remark of Newman's how the theory of two classes arises, and even becomes inevitable, as soon as the ascetic position is accepted even in a modified degree. In a sermon on Lent he discusses the temptation of reaction into self-indulgence, that follows immediately after a prolonged fast, and he adds: 'This grievous consequence is said actually to happen in some foreign countries, in the case of the multitude, who never will have a deep and consistent devotion while the world lasts.'[1] It is strange to find the ascetic ideal leading to a similar contemptuous exclusiveness, which we noted as a temptation of the æsthetic ideal, which makes self-culture the end of life.

Disastrous also was the effect on ordinary Christian

[1] *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi. ser. 3.

life, on the men at the lower level as well as those on the higher. The two classes were set against each other, and this division of the Christian life turned the Church, from being the whole body of believers with equal rights and duties, into an ecclesiastical aristocracy, and worship became a service performed by the priest for the laity. Practically it meant a blow at Christian morality, for it lowered the tone of secular society, not merely by the loss of so many earnest men who might have kept the world pure, but most of all by making it understood that ordinary believers were not expected to come up to the high ideal. Men who did not take the vows might be selfish, and proud, and worldly, and yet be Christians, on a lower plane, it is true, but still accepted by the Church in spite of their sins. The practical result meant discouragement of all who were admittedly on the lower level, who mixed in the world, and married, and did the usual business of life. When the life of seclusion was exalted above the common life of Christians, the effect was as we might expect. Much was not asked from the common believer, and gradually the ordinary business of life lost its place as the recognised sphere of the Christian calling. This tendency, even at an early time, is casually illustrated by Clement of Alexandria, who says that when he sought to influence public morals he was met by the excuse, 'We cannot all be philosophers and ascetics. We are ignorant people, and cannot read the Holy

Scriptures; why should we be subjected to such rigorous demands?'[1] It was a very natural retort. When the dignity of the ordinary Christian calling is lost sight of, the standard of piety in the lower positions is bound to suffer.

The distinction into two classes gives also an excuse to worldly men to ride off on the plea that they had no call to the life of seclusion, and were only ordinary people living in the midst of the world, and therefore could not be expected to display the heroic virtue natural enough among the perfect. The true ideal of the Christian life has been obscured by the error that the holiness, which gives a man a title to be a saint, has nothing to do with common life. But holiness is not a negative thing, a state of being free from contamination, avoiding the stains of the world; it is a state of being and becoming, a progressive mastery over life and the conditions of life, a growth into spiritual power; and to this all are called, to live in God through all the vicissitudes of lot, amid all the work and relationships of the world, inspired with the spirit of faith, and prayer, and communion. It is the nobler task, and the harder. The moral and spiritual demands made on us are concerned with our actual lives in the world. If to flee from duty and the hard sphere where it is not easy to be true to our highest ideal, if to escape from the seductions of the world to some convenient desert, is the condi-

[1] Clemens, *Pædag.* i. 3.

tion of sainthood, then we are not all called to be saints. The world could not get its business done if we were all saints of that type.

Besides, that is often the path of cowardice. In the complexity of modern life, with persistent claims on all sides, with clamant demands on time and thought, with its many unsolved problems, the simplest way out of all difficulties is to throw it up. The easiest way to unloose the knot is to cut the cord. The desert is always easier than Corinth; the hermit's cell than the market-place; the cloister than the hearth; but the saints of Corinth, of the market-place, and of the hearth, may be most to the mind of Jesus. There is another Martyrology than the canonical one, which will have many nameless saints consecrating their lives to service, the sweet, humble souls who are the salt of the earth and save it from corruption, the loving hearts that are the light of the world.

We need to get the word and the idea of sainthood back to its New Testament usage, and to realise that it is not a far-away ideal to which only a few exceptional men can aspire, but a task to which all are summoned. We must avoid all distinctions, which would create a religious aristocracy in the great commonwealth of the faith; for there are other and similar ways of perverting the Christian ideal for all, as well as the Roman Catholic one. We may create distinctions by laying emphasis on the mere intellectual

apprehension of the truth, between the cultured who have entered into the mysteries, and the simple believer; or we may create distinctions even in the name of evangelical religion. The term 'higher holiness,' for example, which is common in certain quarters, is a most unfortunate one, though we must sympathise with every attempt to raise the level of aspiration and attainment. The danger is a spiritual exclusiveness, which may be only another form of Pharisaism, as well as leading the ordinary Christian to imagine that he has no call to realise to the full the Christian ideal. It is the Christian task to adjust all the duties and relations of life to the love of God, which makes its imperious claim on the human heart; and this task is not the exceptional but the common lot of all.

By dismissing the mediæval notion of sainthood, with its division of ethics, we will get back the moral dynamic it contains. It is a true principle of morals that men will become what they are trusted to be, and will do what is expected of them, will approximate not only their own ideal but even the ideal which others set up for them. This is seen in the education of children, where the system of distrust is always a failure. A child brought up by that method will almost infallibly give good cause for the distrust. He is driven to it, to justify the mean and poor opinion in which he is held. In all our dealing with our fellows this is a principle which can be counted on for much, that they will be what is laid on their sense of honour to be. The

normal conscience rises to the demands made on it, and easily falls to the limit of the standard expected from it. When St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he called them saints, though his epistles reveal sins which would have made a less stout heart despair of them. 'The Church of God in Corinth,' to which the Apostle writes, was what Bengel calls a great and joyful paradox. When we think of the evil reputation which the city had among the cities of the ancient world as a place notorious for its debauchery, the very name of Corinth being a byword for loathsome sin, we get some idea of the strange combination of the two names which make Bengel call it a paradox. But the circumstances which made it a great and joyful paradox made the Apostle all the more anxious to lift up the standard of holy living, and to keep it up, and induced him to lay stress on the high calling. In his very designation of them as 'sanctified and called to be saints'[1] he points to the character they are expected to display. He reminds them, by a sort of glorious anticipation, of their dignity, that they may stand fast in their present attainment, and may even rise higher. The process is stated as a completion, the work is stated as an act, but there is no contradiction in the combination of ideas. It just means that they are consecrated, and so are called to the consecrated life.

[1] 1 Cor. i. 2.

CHAPTER X

THE PHYSICAL TREATMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

THOUGH it is a constant danger of asceticism to become an end in itself, yet it begins usually as a recognised means of attaining some coveted spiritual result, not merely saving the life from evil, but also moving it to a higher good. This hope, which underlies ascetic practices, is based on the experience, that physical treatment does affect the whole spiritual condition. It is found as a matter of fact that men can induce certain states of mind, and even seem to enter into divine mysteries, by habits and exercises that begin with the body. This is a region of great difficulty, where exaggeration is fatally possible, but where under-statement of the facts is also very common. It is not easy to thread our way in a sphere like this, which is so subtle and so delicate; but no consideration of the ascetic ideal can be complete without taking into account the facts, which indeed give it its perennial vitality. The physical treatment of the spiritual life has ever been a subject of fascination to men, and endless have been the experiments they have tried. All ascetic practices,

which are genuinely religious, are accepted as the approved method of reaching a fuller spiritual communion, and of attaining a religious exaltation, thought to be otherwise impossible. The truth at the bottom of them all is the admittedly close connection of our bodily acts with the state of the mind and even of the soul.

There is here an interesting illustration of the strange manner in which human thought goes in circles, so that what at first seem utter extremes meet. All such physical treatment of the soul is a tacit acknowledgment of the unity of man's being, and yet many of the ascetic practices go rather on the principle that a true man is a disembodied spirit having as far as possible shuffled off the mortal coil. Self-mortification attempts to feed the soul by starving all bodily instincts and crushing out all natural impulses. Thus as we have said extremes meet, because a fundamental error of all ascetic systems is the subdivision of a human being into parts, as if body can be regarded as something apart from mind and soul, and as if soul can only be perfected when the body is utterly renounced; and yet the very attempts are an evidence of the truth of the oneness of man's nature; for they start with the fact that the two are so closely united that the soul can be helped or hindered by the body. The great fact, which makes the ascetic ideal in any degree reasonable, is that the different parts of the being of man are relative to each other. The animal part cannot be

isolated from the rest of his nature. This can be most clearly seen by remembering that the body is indeed the medium of all knowledge. Through the senses we derive the impressions, intellectual and spiritual, which are our highest possessions; and these impressions are coloured by the medium through which they pass. Man is a unity; not a duality as is so often imagined in ascetic thought (flesh and spirit joined together in a loathsome union, like a living prisoner chained to a dead corpse); nor a triad (body and mind and soul, each dwelling apart with a life of its own). We can make distinctions in our nature for convenience of speech, but they must be confessedly inexact. Man is one and indivisible; the life that he lives in the flesh is the life that he lives in the soul. We can classify in a broad way, but we cannot tell even where mind or soul begin.

The connection between body and mind is a commonplace of thought with us, but it is not yet a commonplace of practice. In the training and education of children, for example, how difficult it is to steer a straight course between the two extremes that are possible here. We constantly find a swing of the pendulum in the prevailing notions of education held by people. At one time physical culture is put first, and is almost exclusively attended to, till we are afflicted with the idolatry of muscularity; then we find a period when the worse error gets hold, which considers only mental training, and looks upon it as a great thing if by hot-house methods child-prodigies

can be produced. Yet true education must aim at co-ordinate development in this matter, as Montaigne says wisely, 'I would have the disposition of his limbs formed at the same time as his mind; for it is not a soul, it is not a body, we are training up, but a man, and we ought not to divide him.' As a matter of fact, neither in education nor in life can we divide human nature into parts without inevitable loss and error. The relation of mind to body is a very close one, in which each affects the other for good or evil. We are more dependent on physical conditions for our happiness, and even for our goodness, than we perhaps like to admit. It is astonishing how our view of life takes its colour from the state of health. Physicians know that, if they could cure the sick soul in many cases, they would get at the secret of the sick body; and ministers know that, if sometimes they could produce conditions and environment of health, they could bring many a man to a different way of thinking. In a vague fashion we recognise these facts, but as a rule we are in the dark about the mystery of the interpenetrating influence of body on mind, and the reflex action of mind on body. There is a great future for mental therapeutics, when it gets free from the charlatan and the quack. We know in general terms, as a maxim of both morals and of medicine, that

> Faults in the life breed errors in the brain,
> And these reciprocally those again;
> The mind and conduct mutually imprint
> And stamp their image in each other's mint.

It may seem, as it has often done to some hypersensitive minds, a degradation that the higher nature should be so dependent on the lower, and that intellectual and even moral qualities should gain or lose tone according to the state of the health. Whether it is a degradation or not, it is wise to accept facts, and this close connection of body and mind is a solemn fact.

Looked at properly it contains no degrading ideas, but rather suggests the sacredness of all the laws of our nature. It makes health a duty, and every wilful disobedience to the laws of health becomes a crime; for it not only punishes the body where the sin took place, but affects the whole man. We are learning the truth of this in education, and we see that man needs to be a good animal, before the best of anything else is possible. The keenest brain needs a foundation of physical health to do its best work. Jowett, the late Master of Balliol, said that one of the causes of failure at the University of some promising students was neglect of health, either through the carelessness of ignorance or through moral evil. Many a man learns, after it is too late, that he is not fit for the prolonged mental efforts he might have been but for early folly.

Sir Walter Scott speaks in his *Journal* of how he suffered from fluttering of the heart, and of the dispiriting effect it had on him, though he knew that it was nothing organic but was merely nervous. He says that in youth this complaint used to throw

him into involuntary passions of causeless tears. He manfully set himself to drive it away by exercise, though he wishes he had been a mechanic. He was a man of healthy nature in every sense, but he too had his times of depression. At the time he made the entry in his *Journal*, he had been overworked and overstrained, and confesses he had not taken exercise for four or five days. He asks, as many brain-workers have often done, whether it is the body brings it on the mind or the mind on the body, though he accepts it as part of the price he had to pay for other things. 'As to body and mind, I fancy I might as well enquire whether the fiddle or the fiddlestick makes the tune.'[1] It is folly to shut our eyes to the fact that man is subject to the organic laws, which govern all life. Every brain-worker has to learn something of the physical limits, under which he must work. Nature does not repeal her punishments easily, and when we realise that we often have to pay not in mere physical uneasiness, but in intellectual deprivation, we should feel the responsibility. When the harmony of life is out of tune it is often found, as Scott found in that particular case, that it is the fiddle that is out of order and not the fiddlestick, the body and not the mind. From such a point of view wilful neglect of health is criminal, differing only in degree from suicide. Loss of time, loss of work, languid performance of duty, result from ill-health. Our accountants can give us the average

[1] *Journal*, entry March 14th, 1826.

number of days lost per year to the community by illness, but who can calculate how much of that is self-caused, or is produced through self-neglect? On the whole it is a good thing that the tide has turned in education, and that we have ceased to think that it pays to over-educate children and undermine their constitution by undue stimulation of brain. The brain is a sensitive organ, the capacity of which is affected in many ways. Perfect sanity of judgment, penetration of mind, good sense, acute discrimination, reasonableness, are all more likely to be found in a state of health than in a state of debility.

But this relation of the body seems to go deeper still into life; for we find the effect of bodily condition in the springs of moral thinking and acting, as well as of purely mental states. Functional derangements tend to become organic, and organic disease preys not on the body merely, but disturbs the brain, affects the will, and prevents a man from being fully master of his own designs. Irritated nerves are responsible for some abnormal moral conditions as well as for some morbid states of mind. Cheerfulness is often a matter not of superior virtue but of healthy digestion. The sins of temper, which mean pain to others, as well as to the man himself, are often the result of physical prostration or unstrung nerves. The jaundiced eye sees everything in its own hue. Much of Carlyle's philosophy and many of his judgments had their roots in his dyspepsia. There is a close connection

of the laws of health with the laws of morality. A truly healthy man, with cleanness of blood and clear brain and healthy tastes, will keep free from some evils almost by instinct; and on the other hand the moral standpoint given by religion reacts to create healthy conditions for the brain and the other bodily functions.

This is along the line of the many facts which are being accepted to-day, as to the reflex influence of the mind on the body. States of feeling can create physical conditions; cerebral excitement, as every doctor knows, affects bodily functions. Anger can burst a blood-vessel; fear can paralyse the nerve centres; grief can make a young man old in a night; care paints her image on the face and bows the shoulders in a pathetic stoop. The resources of the mind brought to bear on the body can sometimes banish disease in a manner which is almost uncanny. Further, health is contagious as well as disease. Half of the secret of the success of some of our great doctors lies in the moral qualities, the courage, faith, brightness, hopefulness, which seem to be stored in their healthful temper and nature. The mind, by appealing to faith and hope in others, is able also to influence their very bodies; and this old truth is what enables many quackeries of the faith-healing sects to live at all.

Now the calm acceptance of such facts is the right policy for us. The lesson of this close interaction of mind and body is that we should put the whole

treatment of the body on a moral basis. De Quincey closes the section dealing with Health of his treatise on *Casuistry* with some strong words, which have added weight from his own mistakes in dealing with himself, 'Casuistry justly and without infringing any truth of Christianity urges the care of health as the basis of all moral action, because, in fact, of all perfectly *voluntary* action. Every impulse of bad health jars or untunes some string in the fine harp of human volition ; and, because a man cannot be a moral being but in the proportion of his free agency, therefore it is clear that no man can be in a high sense moral, except in so far as through health he commands his bodily powers, and is not commanded by them.'[1]

Of course we know the limitations of any such statement, which looks as if we could put a good digestion in place of a good conscience. A man of perfect physique may have no mind at all to speak of, and be utterly crass in his moral sentiments. What it means is that, other things being equal, a man in good health will do better work, and be more trustworthy in his thoughts and judgments, than if he suffered from ill-health. It has also to be remembered that many a time pain of body has taught the deepest lessons, and that such pain has even been a school of saints, in which they have learned patience and faith and charity, and have hushed their souls into peace before God. Many a

[1] *Collected Works*, vol. viii. p. 355.

sweet and pure character has been formed through severe bodily discipline. They have made the very rod a staff to comfort and support them. This does not, however, justify any wilful neglect, or wicked and foolish action against the laws of health. Suffering may have, as in countless cases it has had, beneficent results, deepening the very soul, and enriching the life; but it all depends on how it comes, and how it is received. Instead of refining, it may only brutalise, and coarsen still more the fibre. If the weakness of body is the result of excess and sin, if the lassitude has been self-sought and the pain self-inflicted, even though it does ultimately bring wisdom, it is a joyless wisdom, the sort of wisdom which comes, when the heart is eaten out, when life has lost its beauty and grace, and the world, which should have been the scene of purity of thought and grace of speech and nobility of deed, has become a place of mourning and ashes.

One true moral, therefore, which we should draw from the close connection of body with mind and spirit, is that the body should be treated sacredly, as an integral part of human nature. Every act of intemperance of whatever sort, every sin against the physical constitution, every wilful neglect of the laws of health and moral life, is injuring the *self* in ways too delicate to estimate, and is dimming the radiance of the soul. Sin writes its terrible retribution on the very nerve and tissue. On this subject we find men among the prophets, who do not always accept every

Christian position. Herbert Spencer writes with prophetic earnestness, 'Few seem conscious that there is such a thing as physical morality. Men's habitual words and acts imply the idea that they are at liberty to treat their bodies as they please. Disorders entailed by disobedience to Nature's dictates they regard simply as grievances; not as effects of a conduct more or less flagitious. Though the evil consequences inflicted on their dependents, and on future generations, are often as great as those caused by crime; yet they do not think themselves in any degree criminal. It is true that in the case of drunkenness the viciousness of a bodily transgression is recognised; but none appear to infer that if this bodily transgression is vicious so too is every bodily transgression. The fact is that all breaches of the laws of health are *physical sins*.'[1] Just because we do not place life on a physical basis this should appeal to us; we are all the more bound to accept it because life has a moral basis. Mental vigour and spiritual insight are not got through despising the physical side of life.

We have been led to state one of the true conclusions which should follow from the fact of the connection of body with the higher life, before dealing with the mistakes which have arisen in this region. The ascetic mistake starts from the fact that the soul is unmistakably sensitive to the body,

[1] Herbert Spencer, *Education* (Pop. Ed.), p. 171.

and that all the spiritual experiences are bound up with the physical life. Self-control, in bodily acts such as eating and drinking, does without doubt affect more than the body; it disposes towards a state of mind and a moral habit, which are essential to spiritual progress. Further, a resolute disciplined habit of separation from the distractions of earth gives the suitable sphere for the holy meditation, by means of which the soul grows deep and strong. Self-control of some kind, and some form of solitude, seem necessary instruments of devotional culture. These, then, are the facts which all religious experience warrants; and the natural temptation arises to exaggerate these methods, and to work upon the soul according to prescribed forms to attain spiritual exaltation. If a man is ambitious of penetrating into the innermost secrets of the celestial light, it is natural to assume that he can at least go far, if he is willing to shake off every clog, and will shrink from no extreme of self-denial. Separation and mortification, as complete as possible, come to be accepted as the approved and infallible methods of reaching the heavenly vision and entering into spiritual communion. It becomes easy to believe that any uncommon experience is an evidence of success; and thus we find men, who are eager for personal illumination, confusing the most grotesque experiences with spiritual blessedness. They do not 'try the spirits whether they are of God.'[1]

[1] 1 John iv. 1.

The story of human error in this region is not a pleasant one to read, though we recognise the facts which have given such error currency. Delusions, visions, ecstatic states, mystical hallucinations, have deceived men into imagining that these are tests of spirituality: and often they are found divorced from all moral law. A great deal of the self-denial and the discipline, insisted on in ascetic devotion, is unreal, and much easier than the fruits of the spirit in humility, and meekness, and love; as forms of outward penance are always easier to the mass of men than real inward discipline. By means of exercises, a man can put himself into a state of dream, rising sometimes to ecstasy; but it may only be a surface discipline, without true training of mind, and will, and imagination, and heart. When we put the stress on the mere seeing of visions or some emotional exaltation, then what best produce such are looked upon as the highest religious instruments. We know, for instance, that the hypnotic state can be induced by fixed staring, but we know that mesmerism has in itself no religious significance. Hypnotists also induce trance by suggestion, by superimposing their will on the patient's will; and this can be done by a man on himself, where he is, so to speak, both the patient and the operator. If a man resigns his mind to credulity, he can produce almost any state of mind he desires, with consequences both on bodily condition on the one side, and on what seems like spiritual condition on the

other; and so we find the same type of mind producing in one a weak hypochondria, and in another a mystic exaltation that seems to raise him above physical conditions altogether.

A mistaken notion of what is the true character of spirituality is at the bottom of many of the grotesque practices, which we see appearing and reappearing in history, all based on the physical treatment of the soul. The penitential discipline of the mediæval Church gave ground for the extravagances; for that discipline undoubtedly seemed to effect what was claimed for it. Practices like self-laceration, and the systematic weakening of the body, by prolonged fasts and watchings, by severe scourgings, by wearing sackcloth, chains, girdles with pricks to wound the flesh, and suchlike, had as their impelling cause the desire to produce a state which was held to give abundant entrance into divine mysteries. It was not the mere desire for notoriety which gave rise to the flagellants, who lashed themselves into an ecstatic fury; for since the Church sanctioned such things as an authorised method of discipline, it was naturally assumed that the more complete the discipline the more perfect would be the results. In Church history we find paroxysms of flagellation, such as the great recrudescence seen during the period of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, which spread over a great part of Europe, till it had to be put down by the Church. Some of the flagellants developed heretical views, renounced

the sacraments of the Church as useless to those who accepted complete mortification, for whom the one and only sacrament needed was that of the bloody baptism of the scourge. The discipline of the lash was revived by the Jesuits, and received ecclesiastical sanction. Similarly, sects have arisen constantly, and have kept ground for a time, the chief item of whose creed seems to be some form of dancing; from the Euchites of the fifth century, called also Messalians or Chorentes from their mystic dances, down to the Shakers, who have been popularly so called from the quivering motion of their body in their solemn religious dances or processions. The author has seen Moors dancing and cutting themselves, till they fell down in a sort of madness, to the great admiration of the spectators, who looked on them as peculiarly holy men. The history of ecclesiastical fasts also cannot be complete without taking into account the facts, which seem to authorise the physical treatment of the spiritual life. Many of the symptoms can be explained on pathological grounds, the connection between nervous affections and ecstatic visions, the exaltation of feeling, rising to enthusiasm, and issuing in fantastic visionary ideas of bliss. The groundwork of truth is that the treatment of the body does determine to some extent both mental and spiritual results, so that it is a natural step to invent artificial discipline to hasten these results.

Thus, apart from the gross, unregulated practices

which we have noticed, all systems of ascetic devotion make much of the mechanics of prayer, and methods of solitude, and preparation of soul by fasting and suchlike. This is a difficult region, where hard and fast lines cannot be drawn. It is impossible to take a clear attitude of condemnation, since *method* of some sort seems necessary here as in other spheres of culture. Protestantism has suffered much by often renouncing method altogether; and it must be admitted that we have among us too little devotional culture, and have paid too little attention to the development of the contemplative life generally. Something, however, is to be said for this distrust of method, when we think of the errors committed in its name, and of the tendency to subordinate real spiritual fruits to mechanical forms, resulting in spurious spirituality.

A noteworthy instance of a consistent treatment of the body is found in the exercises prescribed by Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. In order to see the danger of the system inaugurated, we do not need to believe with Carlyle that Jesuitism is in its spirit only 'an apotheosis of falsity, a kind of subtle quintessence and deadly virus of lying,' and the result of Ignatius' black militia on Europe merely an 'abominable mud-deluge,' though Carlyle had historic reason for some of his indignation; nor need we look upon Ignatius himself as a scandalous mortal, a man full of prurient elements from the first, 'A bad man, I think; not good by nature;

and by destiny swollen into a very Ahriman of badness.'[1] He was a sincere, and from his own point of view a devout man, earnestly desirous of furthering religion in himself and throughout the world. His *Spiritual Exercises*, full as they are of false religious conceptions, are also full of a passionate desire to discipline his soul, and to make it a channel of divine grace. They were begun for his own spiritual benefit, and were afterwards given to train the order he established. The great thought of the book is method, using rigidly and persistently the prescribed mechanics of devotion. Not only the subjects of meditation, and the special virtues and graces desired, but also the times, and postures, and the details of manner are all regulated. The exercitant is told how he is to stand, and when to shut his eyes, and for how long, during his contemplation. At one time he is to stand for the space of a *Pater noster* one or two paces from the place in which he is about to meditate, and make an act of reverence or humiliation ; at another he is to vary his posture during the contemplation, at one time kneeling, at another prostrate on the earth, or stretched on the ground with face upward, now seated, now standing. Then having finished the exercise, he is to examine for the space of a quarter of an hour how he has succeeded in the contemplation. Again, he is to deprive himself of all light, shutting the shutters and doors, during the time he

[1] Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*—'Jesuitism.'

is in the room. He is to learn to restrain his eyes while speaking to people, only looking at them when receiving or dismissing them. These exercises are to be accompanied with penance, which is divided into interior and exterior penance, the former consisting in grieving for sin, and resolving not to commit sin, the latter, which is the fruit of the interior, consists in chastisement for sins committed, and this is inflicted chiefly in three ways. First, in regard to food, not in cutting off what is superfluous, which is not penance but temperance, but in retrenching what is suitable, 'and the more we retrench the greater and better is the penance, provided only the person be not injured and no notable weakness ensue.'[1] The second is in regard to sleep, and here again it is not leaving off what is superfluous, but in leaving off conveniences, and the more this is done the better the penance—with the same proviso as before that no injury is done. The third manner is to chastise the flesh by causing it sensible pain, which is to be inflicted by wearing a hair-cloth, cords, or iron chains next the skin, by disciplining or bruising the body, and by other kinds of austerities. Pain, not sickness, is to be the result aimed at, pain sensible to the flesh that will not penetrate to the bone; and so the instrument prescribed as most convenient is a lash of small cords, that will cause pain exteriorly without injuring the health. The rules for regulating food are along the

[1] *Spiritual Exercises*—First Week: Additions.

same lines. Pious contemplation about the lives of the saints is prescribed while taking food, to take the mind away, that there be less delight and sensible pleasure in the act of eating. Here again sickness is to be avoided, but the more a man can give up the oftener he will 'experience interior lights, and consolations, and divine inspirations.'[1] Ignatius thought he found these consolations and inspirations through such methods; and we have seen in what sense it was true that a certain exaltation of emotion can be produced, which is easily mistaken for a spiritual state.

This is confirmed by some of the methods[2] of prayer, which Ignatius orders. In one method the exercitant is to keep his eyes shut or fixed on one spot, say the word *Pater*, and dwell on the consideration of this word so long as he finds meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolation in thoughts about this word; and he is to act in the same way in regard to each word of the Lord's Prayer or other prayer. This method is to be continued for one hour. Another method is the rhythmical, which consists in saying one word of the Lord's Prayer at each breath or respiration, so that only one word is said between each breath, and in the length of time between each breath attention is to be paid to the signification of the word.

We need say nothing as to how such a system

[1] *Spiritual Exercises*—Third Week.
[2] Fourth Week: Three Methods of Prayer.

conflicts with the teaching of Jesus, who condemned all 'vain repetition as the heathen do.' We can see how such a methodised system of devotion makes a suitable beginning for novices, who seek to enter the order of the Jesuits, which drills its members into obedience, and passive acceptance of commands, and the complete giving up of the individual will. We are, however, not concerned with the achievements and demerits of the Jesuit system, but with the physical treatment of the spiritual life so plainly set forth in the *Spiritual Exercises*. There is a business-like utilisation of the mechanics of devotion to produce the best spiritual results, with an equal business-like care that the line be not overstepped, which would injure health, and injure the capacity of serving the order and the Church. The system has succeeded in creating a drilled religious militia, with an unquestioning obedience, and a complete discipline, such as no secular army in the world has ever equalled or approached ; but history has never given the Jesuit system credit for pure spiritual results, which can be compared to their practical success. The truth is that the interior lights and consolations and inspirations, which such devotional exercises produce, cannot be called spiritual at all. They are mostly sensuous emotions, physical in their character, as they are physical in their origin. They are of the same class as the hypnotic trance got in a similar way, by fixing the eyes on one spot,

and by resigning the will. When religion is chiefly valued according to the emotions raised, more and more stress comes to be laid on the forms which produce emotion, and religion itself is bound to degenerate. The spiritual life is inseparably related to character, and all spiritual truth must be tested by conscience and by moral law. Only by moral sympathy can we truly enter into the mind of Christ; and methods, which are artificially imposed to reach a supposed sanctification, can hardly escape from being divorced from moral reverence and moral obedience. The danger of all physical treatment of the spiritual life is externalism and formalism.

It will simplify our discussion if we narrow it down to one particular item of all ascetic practice, that of fasting, which has a recognised place in all systems as an instrument of spiritual culture. The surface temptation which it carries is of course the empty doing of it as a duty of religion, culminating in an ostentation like that of the Pharisees in their acts of fasting. They had reduced it to a system, and had made it a distinct religious duty, quite apart from the spiritual results it was supposed to accomplish. Our Lord in condemning it enforced the necessity of sincerity and reality above all things in religion, and taught that all forms, fasting included, must be judged by the purity and simplicity of intention. He points to the danger and

temptations of such mechanical exercises. All bodily discipline, all kinds of abstinence, can have value only as means, and when this is forgotten they become a degradation. The idolatry of forms is the constant temptation of the human heart, and our Lord prescribed no forms as in themselves sacred. Men have practised self-denial, fasting, and all sorts of renunciation, in order to overcome their besetting temptations and sins; and these very abstinences, however helpful and seemingly necessary, may become a subtler temptation. For one thing, when religion is reduced to mechanical rule, men soon covet the appearance, which is cheaply got; and artificial adherence to the rule is the inevitable result. This was the condemnation of the Pharisees, that they made a parade of their strict exercises; and that, laying stress on outward performance instead of humility of heart, which fasting was meant to symbolise and to encourage, they made it an occasion of ostentation.

Besides, all forms like fasting create temptations, if they are raised to the level of religious duty. This was the protest against the ascetic rules of monasticism, made by such different men as Luther and Erasmus. The point of Erasmus' constant contention, in many of his *Colloquies*[1] and elsewhere, is that it is wrong to lay down such forms as Christian duty which a man or woman neglects at peril. He often speaks with indignation of the

[1] *e.g. Familiar Colloquies*—'The Penitent Virgin.'

formalism, to which all ascetic acts had arrived in his time, including the monastic vow. It led some who had no call to such a life to attempt it, with disastrous moral results, and it hurt many a gentle conscience. In the same line also Luther calls the founders of the religious orders troublers of men's consciences. Luther indeed, who spoke from experience as Erasmus did, strongly condemned the solitary life as a religious method, while he admitted the measure of truth it contained. The great point insisted on by both is that these things should not be elevated into rules of religion. 'It is a perilous thing for a man to be alone,' writes Luther. 'Wherefore they that ordained that cursed monkish and solitary life gave occasion to many thousands to despair. If a man should separate himself from the company of others for a day or two to be occupied in prayer (as we read of Christ that He sometimes went aside alone into the Mount, and by night continued in prayer), there were no danger therein. But when they constrained men continually to live a solitary life it was a device of the devil himself; for when a man is tempted and is alone he is not able to raise himself up, no not in the least temptation that can be.'[1] Ascetic methods are condemned by Erasmus and Luther, because they are imposed as sacred rules of duty, whereas they can have no religious significance, except as they are the natural expression of an inward motive.

[1] *On Galatians*, p. 324.

They both also assert that they produce new temptations, apart altogether from the possibility of violent reaction, by which nature reasserts herself, and apart from the spiritual danger of pride when a man does succeed in silencing nature. The physical treatment of the soul, which men take up so lightly, must be a delicate task, requiring wisdom, and individual treatment, and cannot be comprehended in general rules to be applied indiscriminately. If we are in the dark about the relation of mind to body, much more are we in the dark as to how any persistent bodily action will affect each individual soul.

All who have ever tried, even in a modified degree, any of the prescribed methods of repressions in the hope that they offered an infallible instrument of spiritual culture, cannot but confess that it was like ignorant blundering fingers tampering with delicate mechanism whose working was mysterious. Newman admits that fasting, for example, does not lessen temptations but creates them. He confesses it may make a man irritable, and ill-tempered, or may produce a feebleness which deprives him of his wonted command over his bodily acts, feelings, and expressions. 'Thus it may make him seem, for instance, to be out of temper when he is not; I mean because his tongue, his lips, nay, his brain, are not in his power. He does not use the words he wishes to use, nor the accent and tone. . . . Again, weakness of body may deprive him of self-

command in other ways; perhaps he cannot help smiling or laughing, when he ought to be serious, which is evidently a most distressing and humbling trial; or when wrong thoughts present themselves, his mind cannot throw them off, any more than if it were some dead thing and not spirit. Or again, weakness of body often hinders him from fixing his mind on his prayers, instead of making him pray more fervently; or again, weakness of body is often attended with languor and listlessness, and strongly tempts a man to sloth. Yet I have not mentioned the most distressing of the effects which may follow from even the moderate exercise of this great Christian duty. It is undeniably a means of temptation, and I say so lest persons should be surprised and despond when they find it so.'[1] It is an instance of the peculiar twist in Newman's mind that he should see this, and yet not see its implication. All he has said, besides the more distressing effects he tells us he has left unsaid, did not make him question whether it is such a clear Christian duty as he assumes. If it exposes men to thoughts from which they turn with abhorrence and terror, as he confesses it does, then instead of subduing the flesh, which is claimed for it, on the contrary it gives the flesh power. No value as a penitential exercise can make up for such dangers. It will always remain far more of a Christian duty to avoid being irritable and ill-

[1] *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi. serm. 1.

tempered, than to gain some expected sanctity at the risk of wounding others with tongue or act. Surely with such supposed instruments of piety the test must be rigorously applied: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'

In addition, it must be remembered that men are not all made in one cast-iron mould, and that therefore such abstinences have different effects on different persons. It follows that the same formal act will be various in its results. To apply it as a fixed rule of duty is to apply it blindly, like a doctor prescribing medicine by rule of thumb, in the pious hope that something may chance to do good. It is a principle of the modern practice of medicine not to treat the disease so much as the individual patient; and in the subtler region of the soul it is far more difficult to say how any general rule of conduct will affect it. The physical treatment of the spiritual life, working as it does with narrow regulation methods, does not take into account the differences in the material on which it operates. It would be all very well if the aim were to produce uniformity of discipline, as in the Jesuit order, where each responds to superior will as an automaton; but in the varied many-sided sphere of a rich and full Christian life, methods which are applied mechanically are an offence and a hindrance.

The above criticism applies of course only to fasting as a formal and univeral rule, as if it were in itself a Christian duty. It may well be useful to some, and

there will always be occasions when it should come natural to all. If it helps a man to real self-government, it justifies itself. If it makes him more gentle and loving instead of irritable, more prayerful instead of less, if it gives him more control of his whole nature, and if it expresses real sincere repentance and desire for holiness, it justifies itself. But if it, or any other method of formal religion, exposes a man to sin, to pride, to sloth, then it comes under the same condemnation as the forms of fasting which the Pharisees practised. The true view, and the scriptural, is Luther's sane judgment, 'We do not reject fasting and other good exercises as damnable things; but we teach that by these exercises we do not obtain remission of sins.'[1] That is to say, he will not allow a magical efficacy to a form, and will not let a method of personal discipline be elevated into a Christian duty. We must always distinguish between any form and the spiritual reality it is meant to embody. The common mediæval proverb, *Cucullus non facit monachum*[2] (the cowl does not make the monk), shows that it was quite well understood by spiritually minded men that the mere withdrawal from the world might not mean any real change of heart. Many passages in the *Imitatio Christi*, for example, recognise this, such as, 'The wearing of the religious habit, and the shaving of

[1] *Com. on Galatians*, ii. 3, *ad loc.*

[2] Shakespeare makes the clown translate the proverb as 'I wear not motley in my brain.'—*Twelfth Night*, i. 5.

the crown, profit but little; but change of manners, and perfect mortification of passions, make a true religious[1] man.'[2] Only as we realise that there is no merit in any form in itself will we be saved from the many temptations of formalism, and be able to use a form for our own best life. It might be good for some to fast who do not, to practise some contempt for the material side of life, which to-day threatens to engulf the soul. If we condemn any rigid rules like fasting, it should not be because of the greater laxity of our own lives, but because we have a higher and more spiritual standard, and because our ideal is that religion should be the guiding spirit and paramount power in every region of life, in the civil and social relations as well as what are called the more distinctively religious. It has always been common for frivolity and worldliness to condemn all forms of seriousness and zeal, just because these are a rebuke of the selfish pursuit of pleasure and of soft complacent living. Puritanism and every kindred seriousness are sneered at, not for the things in which they contradict the spirit of the Christian faith, but for the things which in them are essentially Christian. The easy worldly temper objects to the earnest and zealous interpretation of religious duty. Rather, we would admit the profound truth and universal obligation of self-denial, which has so often been clothed in ungainly forms,

[1] Note '*religious*' has its usual reference to the monastic life.
[2] Bk. I. chap. xvii.

but which makes its imperious demand on us still if we would be true men ; only, all forms of self-denial must be alive with spiritual motive and not dead mechanical rules; and, if duty seems to prescribe them, they must be accepted not as themselves parts of Christian duty, but as means to the great Christian ends of love and holiness and service.

The physical treatment of the spiritual life by prescribed mechanical rules really puts the cart before the horse; for what is wanted rather is the spiritual treatment of the physical life, consecrating every power and activity by a sacred motive, putting all life on a moral basis. From this point of view our treatment of the body will be regulated by the acknowledgment that it is an integral part of human nature, partaking of the fortunes of the life, sharing in its failures and successes, and contributing to both. It is the instrument of the soul, carrying out its behests ; and at the same time it gives the points of contact through which the soul becomes rich or poor, noble or base. The body therefore demands care and discipline, the wise and strong guidance of mind, and heart, and spirit. It is only when the spiritual rules and directs that there can be permanent harmony, and the body become the servant and instrument of the higher. In this case also the treatment of the body becomes an outward symbol of the inward condition.

> Of all God's works which do this world adorn,
> There is no one more fair and excellent
> Than is man's body, both for power and form,
> While it is kept in sober government;
> But none than it more foul and indecént,
> Distemper'd through misrule and passions base;
> It grows a monster, and incontinent[1]
> Doth lose his dignity and native grace.[2]

This solemn sense of duty to the physical side of life is certainly part of the great lesson of the close connection of body and mind. The true attitude towards the body will be one neither of contempt, nor of weak pandering to its impulses. Something of self-reverence is implied in all adequate self-control.

The great difficulty in any wholesale condemnation of the physical treatment of the spiritual life is that we undoubtedly need method and the careful cultivation of habit. It is easy enough to condemn the idolatry of form, into which men have been led, by concentrating attention on the mechanics of prayer and the regulation methods; but all masters of the devotional life insist on the necessity of creating the opportunities, and giving the soul the suitable environment for growth in grace. Devotional culture is as much the result of effort as mental culture. We recognise the cultured mind when brought into contact with it. It has fed itself with the food of thought, with

[1] *Immediately.*

[2] Spenser, *Faërie Queene*, Bk. II. Canto 9.

wide and accurate reading, with careful study. We feel it has breadth and sweep, with nothing narrow in its judgments. So we recognise the cultured soul, with the aroma of devotion and a peace that rebukes the fret and fever of the day—with holy eyes like the eyes of Raphael's Sistine Madonna, with rebellious heart curbed and brought into submission. All culture is the fruit of discipline; and this highest culture comes from the discipline of heart and will, through giving the soul the necessary occasions. If there is to be any depth of religious life at all, there must be a certain separateness, making the opportunities for the holy duty of 'recollection,' providing times for prayer and meditation, which make a man calm at the heart, and therefore strong for all the needs of living.

The cultivation of the contemplative life is a valuable feature in the purpose which inspired so much ascetic practice. In the emphasis which it laid on meditation there is no keen opposition to the rival ideal of culture, which also in a different way makes much of a similar aloofness, and insists on the value of solitude in producing a rich and deep life. Cowley says, 'To be a philosopher is but to retire from the world, or rather to retire from the world as it is man's, into the world as it is God's'; and something of that inner retirement seems necessary, at once for the calm poise of nature and easeful mastery of work in the great artist, as

well as for the repose of soul in the saint. In our busy practical life the temptation is to be engrossed in outside activities, with no time for the meditation by which the soul gathers itself at the centre, and withdraws from all distracting sights and sounds. Even in religious work it is common to find men with many admirable qualities, active, zealous, eager in all good causes, but with a shallow spiritual life behind, with little sweetness and winsomeness of character, and little of the devotional spirit, and little of the attractive grace, which come from shutting the door to be in secret with the Father, who seeth in secret. There is grim irony in Swedenborg's vision of the hell where everybody is completely busy in making everybody else virtuous.

At the same time this separated life is not a matter of mere formal times of prayer and physical separation from the world. It is rather a cloister in the heart, a spiritual separateness, which brings a new motive, able to cover all the tasks and duties of life which the faith imposes. Its essence is a self-surrender to the will of God, lifting the whole life up to a new level, where the common domestic and social relations and the ordinary work of the world are consecrated. The ultimate test of the contemplative life is its effect on the active life; and the ultimate test of devotion is devotedness. We need method and form in religion as in all other spheres of life, but it is one of the great

ethical revelations of our Lord that character is formed not by method, but by the open vision of God. The recognition of this alone will save method from its besetting temptations, which we have been considering in this chapter.

CHAPTER XI

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON ASCETICISM

In the gradual evolution of the mediæval conception of a saint, and in the growth of the ascetic ideal generally, it was assumed that renunciation of the world in the monastic sense was enjoined in the Bible, and was distinctly taught by Christ. The Church, however, even when it has held this most strongly, has not been quite consistent. The practical necessities of social life, and the stubborn facts of human nature, have compelled a modification of the position. For instance, it has always allowed and sanctioned marriage for the majority of Christian people. By the perfect it might be considered an inferior condition of the religious life, but it was held legitimate for the general mass of believers. Indeed, it has to be remembered that it was the Christian faith after all, which ennobled the whole family relation, and first put marriage on its true and high platform. A very peculiar illustration of the inconsistency, induced by the two different streams of tendency, is afforded by the place which marriage ultimately received. In the mediæval

Church marriage was declared a *sacrament*, and yet the priest was deprived of this sacrament. The celibate life was supposed to be higher than the married life, but the latter had the additional sacrament with the extra grace which a sacrament implied. It may have been because such needed grace more, but there was an instinct in the Church of the true place of marriage, which thus found satisfaction in spite of the illogical position. Though from the middle of the third century onwards the ascetic tendency grew ever more strong, yet the Church did not make it a general rule, and got out of the dilemma, as we have seen, by the theory of two distinct moral codes—one representing a higher vocation, the other a more relaxed standard for weaker brethren. Thus Tertullian, writing about second marriages, and vehemently denouncing them, speaks of two rules; one which tolerates what it cannot prevent, the other a state more in the line of God's preference.

The seeming inconsistency of having two moral rules was got over by asserting that our Lord meant such items of the ascetic creed as renouncing property and abstaining from marriage, not as commands, but as *counsels*; so that those who do not practise these abstinences are not to be blamed, and all are not compelled to adopt them, because all are not capable of them. It was a counsel of perfection set for those able to receive it. Monasticism was declared to be 'de jure divino, non praecipiente

sed consulente.' This is an impossible position, since Jesus in His teaching certainly sanctioned no division of moral rule, and what He called perfection was to be pursued by all His followers without exception; but it was a compromise which to some extent conserved the rights of ordinary Christians.

And as a matter of fact the Christian life in the first centuries did not spend itself in barren asceticism, but brought new vigour into all the ordinary channels and occupations of the world's work. Christians pursued the ordinary avocations, entered into trade and the secular professions, accepted every innocent calling, and only carried into these a new spirit of honesty, and diligence, and unselfishness. There are many indications that their example of integrity in their business life, and of purity in their home life, did more for the spread of the faith than any reasoned pleadings. Tertullian, who became almost fanatically ascetic, makes a point of this in replying to the charge that Christians were a useless sort of people to the world at large. 'How can this possibly be,' he asks, 'since we mix with you as men, have the same food and clothing, and the same necessaries of life as yourselves? We are no Brahmins, or Indian gymnosophists, who live in woods, or recluses in exile from other men. We know the gratitude we owe to God, our Lord the Creator of all, and we reject nothing He has given for man's use. We are indeed temperate in our enjoyment, lest we transgress by excess, or abuse

His favours. Therefore we come to your forum, your baths, inns, workshops, markets, and enter into all other kinds of intercourse. We pursue with you navigation, war, commerce, we share in your arts and public works, and contribute to the service of the public.'[1] It is essential to remember this practical inconsistency, which kept excessive asceticism a very small feature of the early Church, or our picture of these days will get hopelessly out of perspective. Still, with the steady growth of the tendency, it came to be a prevalent assumption that renunciation was indeed the very heart of Christ's teaching, and that the highest life to which He calls men is ascetic in character.

This underlying conception of the Christian creed is by no means obsolete, but is tacitly maintained both by friends and by foes of the Christian faith. It was of course so understood by the whole mediæval Church, and issued in the great monastic system, and is indelibly imbedded in the Church Calendar of the Saints. The Roman Catholic position is still that the life of renunciation and withdrawal from the world is the perfect religious life. All the varied forms of asceticism found in Church history owe their origin to this fundamental conception, that they were in sympathy with the teaching of Jesus. All the mediæval writers take for granted that, if Christ's will is to be perfectly performed, men must accept an ascetic creed. The *Imitatio Christi*, one of the

[1] Tertullian, *Apology*, chap. xlii.

sweetest and sanest of mediæval books, has this as a pre-supposition. 'Flee from the throng of the world into the wilderness as much as thou canst: for the talk of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, although spoken with sincere intention'[1]—and of course this advice is given to men who are already monks, as if the mere embracing of the monastic life were not a sufficient withdrawal. 'Oh how strict and self-renouncing a life led those holy Fathers in the wilderness! . . . They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kinsfolk; they desired to have nothing which appertained to the world; they scarcely took things necessary for the sustenance of life; they grieved to serve their bodies even in necessity.'[2] À Kempis quotes their example of rigorous abstinence to rebuke the lukewarmness and negligence of monks of his own time, and to show what perfect following of Jesus must mean. A similar presupposition is seen in many Protestant quarters, though not carried to the same logical conclusion as by the Roman Catholic Church. Usually it is stated as a vague sentimentalism, making much of renunciation as the doctrine of the cross, without any real sacrifice in it. We find in modern devotional books and in religious poetry, as well as in all forms of pietism and mysticism, the underlying idea that in its ultimate issue the Christian faith asks for renunciation of the world, and that men attain to perfection in the proportion in which they give up the world.

[1] Bk. I. chap. x. [2] Bk. I. chap. xviii.

The thought makes many religious men uneasy, and has certainly increased for them the difficulties of leading the Christian life in the world. The notion that complete following of Jesus means abstention from the practical business and the ordinary activities of society has made many a conscience of believers morbid and strained. It tends to self-deception if Christians believe they should not find enjoyment from the common sources of human joy, and should as far as possible be free from the complications of active interest in the world of affairs, when as a matter of fact they cannot avoid the ordinary pleasures of life. Many who are sincere in their endeavour after the Christian life cannot reconcile this faith with the inevitable necessity of mixing with the world. They have an uncomfortable assurance that they do get enjoyment from recreation of body, and from success in business, and from the pleasures of imagination, and from the ties of affection; while at the bottom of their minds is the thought that religion at its highest and purest demands the renunciation of these. They cannot see their way out of the difficulty; for they do not feel themselves called to sever their lives completely from their ordinary environment; and yet they have a suspicion that to be a perfect Christian they should make a clean sweep of all participation in the world's pleasures. This creates a furtive and strained conscience, so that they are never quite at home in either world. They accuse themselves of self-indulgence, though they believe they have a

sincere interest in religion. They do love God, and honestly desire to do His will; but they are tormented as to what it means, when they are told that they must not love the world, nor the things that are in the world. This uneasy conscience is to be directly attributed to the perhaps unexpressed idea of which we speak.

In a previous chapter[1] we have already referred to the common literary comparison of Christ with Apollo or some other of the Greek gods; and at the same time a comparison between the typical Christian life and the typical pagan life; the latter as simple and natural and joyous, a sort of victorious possession of the world; the former as unearthly, renouncing joy, and creeping out of the great experiences of life. Such comparisons always assume the ascetic character of Christ's life and teaching. Shorthouse, in his very popular book *John Inglesant*, draws this contrast: 'They were standing before the Apollo in the Belvidere gardens. Inglesant took from beneath his vest a crucifix in ivory, exquisitely carved, and held it beside the statue of the god. The one the noblest product of buoyant life, the proudest perfection of harmonious form, purified from all the dross of humanity, the head worthy of the god of day and of the lyre, of healing and of help; the other worn, and emaciated, helpless, dying, apparently without power, forgotten by the world.'[2] Elsewhere he calls Christ 'the Divine Ascetic who trod the winepress of the

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 189.

[2] *John Inglesant*, chap. xxv.

wrath of God.' It must be evident to all how prevalent the thought is that Christ, by His example and teaching, inculcated the principles of asceticism. A modern advocate of a modified monasticism in the Church of England[1] says boldly, that if any dispassionate person could read for the first time our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, he would come to no other conclusion than that the life of the ascetic is distinctly ordained by Christ. Of course early defenders of monasticism insisted also that it not only received the sanction of our Lord's teaching, but that His own life was framed according to the well-known three rules of the monastic orders, Chastity, Poverty, Obedience.

The same opinion as to the essence of the Christian faith is freely expressed by enemies as well as by friends. What some have thought the glory of the faith, namely, that it produces men who make complete sacrifice of all earthly joy, is made by others an accusation in the count against Christianity. They accept to the full the thought that Christ's religion is at bottom ascetic; and then they turn the acknowledgment against it. Renan declares that Jesus boldly preached war against nature, and total severance from ties of blood, and asked from His disciples a complete detachment from the earth, and the practice of absolute poverty; and that His requirements undoubtedly meant the despising of the healthy limits of man's nature. He speaks of the harsh and

[1] Rev. F. C. Woodhouse, *Monasticism*, p. 6.

gloomy feeling of distaste for the world, and of excessive self-abnegation, which characterises Christian perfection. He points to the danger, which threatened the future of this exalted morality. 'By detaching man from earth, the ties of life were severed The Christian would be praised for being a bad son or a bad patriot, if it was for Christ that he resisted his father, or fought against his country. The ancient city, the parent republic, or the law common to all, were thus placed in hostility with the Kingdom of God.' The further consequence of course followed that the ideal of Jesus was impossible, as few could even attempt to realise the Utopia He pointed to. Renan declares that common sense revolts against the conclusion of asceticism, that perfection should be placed outside the ordinary conditions of society; but his whole argument is to show, not the folly of the monastic ideal, but the failure of this part of Christ's teaching.[1] It was natural for Renan, who was trained to be a monk, and who broke away from the position of his youth, to think that the monastic life was the ideal Christian life; for this was the presupposition of his whole early education.

The same acceptance of the thought that the Christian creed is ascetic has often been made by others to show the ethical flaws in Christianity, to show that its system of morals is impracticable, and cannot be adjusted to ordinary human life. The

[1] *Vide* argument of chap. xix. of *Vie de Jésus*.

attempt is to prove Christianity to be unnatural; for the plain man with ordinary healthy instincts feels that a religion, which demands the extirpation of natural impulses, can be no religion for him. He feels sure, without being able to give reasons, that his capacities were not given him to be crushed, and the world was not created to be renounced. He feels that the ordinary blessings of life are good in themselves, and that therefore the religion, which has nothing to say to them, puts itself outside his practical interests.

Similarly, the acceptance of the ascetic ideal as Christian has been made by socialists, who denounce the unworldliness of the faith, and assert that it militates against the introduction of the new social and industrial conditions which they seek to promote. This is a common objection made by the party of reform, and by all who are keenly interested in material and secular progress, though they have no sympathy with theoretic socialism. The objection states that religion puts the emphasis on the future life, and in the interests of the soul contemns worldly conditions; and so it impedes material progress, since it makes men willing to endure injustice, instead of rising up in wrath to put an end to it. And while this applies to the general temper of the Christian faith, it applies with thousandfold weight to the complete ascetic position, which is assumed to be the logical conclusion of the faith. Civilisation, which is taken to be synonymous with temporal wel-

fare, is advanced, we are told, not through the passive virtues like resignation, which religion magnifies, but through competition, through the desire for acquisition, through discontent with the present, finding outlet in remedial measures. Religious faith robs the present of its full power by looking forward to a visionary future. It despises the ordinary life with its pleasures and occupations, and depreciates the active sphere in which men must live, since it makes spiritual contemplation the ideal. It does not love this world, and therefore does not make the best of it. Take a very typical quotation along this line of objection from W. R. Greg's *The Creed of Christendom*: 'It is only those who feel a deep interest in, and affection for, this world, who will work resolutely for its amelioration: those whose affections are transferred to heaven acquiesce easily in the miseries of earth, give them up as hopeless, as befitting, as ordained, and console themselves with the idea of the amends, which are one day to be theirs. If we had looked on this earth as our only scene, it is doubtful if we should have tolerated its more monstrous anomalies and more curable evils. But it is easier to look to a future paradise, than to strive to make one on earth; and the depreciating and hollow language of preachers has played into the hands both of the insincerity and the indolence of mankind.'[1]

It might be answered to this particular charge

[1] *The Creed of Christendom*, p. 250.

that it is not so as a matter of fact, that, though we might perhaps expect those who looked to the future, and who lived in the power of an endless life, to be careless about temporal things, and think it not worth while even remedying glaring abuses; still, as a matter of fact, the world's best benefactors, the men who have lived, and have been willing to die, for the good of their fellows, who have spent themselves in toil for every noble end, the men who have ever given the impulse to all reform, have been just the men who have believed in God, and been inspired by Christ's passion for humanity, and have agonised for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It must be confessed, however, that sometimes the charge has received plausibility from the conduct of some, who have in the name of religion washed their hands of the temporal concerns of the great mass of men; and of course in a completely consistent asceticism the charge would be absolutely valid.

In substantiating the claim that the Bible taught an ascetic creed, the advocates of monasticism were somewhat hard put to it to find support from the Bible, and were often driven to interpret passages in a fanciful manner. The Old Testament on the face of it did not give much help, though it was declared that Elijah and Elisha were monks. There is a healthy naturalism in the Old Testament, which can hardly be missed even by a casual reader. It

never looks on man as a soul degraded by being covered with a body; so the false contempt for the body has no place in Jewish thought. The traditional Jewish view made marriage both a duty and a privilege; and children are called the heritage of the Lord.[1] The most characteristic feature of the early religion of Israel is a bright, joyous cheerfulness; and, though the tone grew deeper and more sombre, it never could be called ascetic. It is true that we find such symptoms as the Nazarite vow to abstain from wine, and also the similar rule of the Rechabites, but these seem to owe their origin to a protest in favour of the simple life of older times; and certainly they are not representative of the great stream of the national life, any more than the Essenes in the New Testament times were. In the second part of the Decalogue, which deals with the relations of man to man, the fundamental conditions of social life are frankly accepted. The morality of the Old Testament indeed is founded on the basis of the family, one of the finest flowers of which is the honour to be shown to parents.[2] All through the law and the prophets it is assumed that a true relation to Jehovah will evidence itself in moral integrity towards men, showing itself in honesty, and justice, and truth, and scrupulous regard for the rights of others. Man indeed, by virtue of the spiritual principle with which he has been endowed, stands above the level of nature, clothed with a

[1] Psalm cxxvii. 3. [2] Fifth Commandment.

special dignity. The earth is given him to cultivate and make his own, and he is to multiply and possess it.[1] Family life is looked on as the natural foundation for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of the race made in God's image, as is implied in the account of man's creation: 'So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them.' Apart then from isolated texts, which seem to be wholly or partially ascetic in their character, the above is unmistakably the great general trend of Old Testament religion. The repudiation of marriage is specially opposed to genuine Jewish ideas, which find expression not only in the Bible, but in the later Talmudic literature, as many references in the Mishna[2] testify.

The situation seems somewhat altered when we come to the New Testament, and it looks as if a good case could be made out on the other side. On the first blush it seems as if Christ meant His religion to be in its essence an ascetic one. Passages can be collated to appear as if He demanded from His disciples the extreme of renunciation. If a man is to win the Kingdom of God, he must be prepared to give up everything else, like the man who sold all his possessions to purchase the field in which was the treasure he had found.[3] The renunciation is stated

[1] Gen. i. 28.

[2] For example, 'No one must withdraw from the duty of having children, unless he has children already, according to the school of Shammai two sons, according to that of Hillel at least a son and a daughter.'—*Jebamoth* vi. 6.

[3] Matt. xiii. 44.

in all its absoluteness as a separation from his very nearest and dearest. 'If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple,'[1] which certainly does look like a warrant for all the extravagances of anchorites, who interpreted it by fleeing from the world altogether. In the great decision there are to be no half measures, no partial renunciation, but complete detachment from the lower loves: 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.'[2] The advice to the rich young ruler, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me,'[3] seems to prohibit all the worldly business which produces wealth; since, if absolute poverty is a condition of discipleship, then it is folly to make wealth merely in order to strip oneself of it later on. That would be a dangerous tampering with evil. And what can look more like the setting up as an ideal the mutilation of all natural desires than the saying, 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell'[4]? The very heart of His teaching is displayed in the profound saying,

[1] Luke xiv. 26.
[2] Luke xiv. 33.
[3] Matt. xix. 21.
[4] Matt. v. 29, 30.

'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.'[1]

A hasty conclusion from such single passages would be to put them out of relation to the general teaching, and often also out of relation to the particular occasion which suggested each saying. Some of them were for an individual case, as with the rich young ruler, where the advice is the special cure from the diagnosis of his spiritual state. It was the reading in church of this advice to the young ruler which induced St. Anthony, the father of Christian monasticism, to begin his career of strict asceticism. The words 'If thou wilt be perfect, give all to the poor,' stung him, and when he left the church he gave away all his ancestral possessions, and distributed all his money, with the exception of a small sum, which he kept for his sister. The next time he went to church the word read was 'Take no thought for the morrow,' and so he then disposed of what he had retained for his sister, being ambitious for her also to be perfect. It may be noted in passing the inconsistency involved in making this a rule; for if the actual possession of property is an absolute hindrance to the spiritual life, then to give it away is to benefit oneself by only adding a terrible temptation to somebody else. There is a certain inevitable selfishness in the extreme ascetic position, similar to the selfishness in the opposite extreme of

[1] Matt. xvi. 25.

self-culture, both making the highest end a perfection for self. A word which was made much of by the early ascetics was 'Take heed to thyself,' bringing often all the vices of morbid introspection and self-absorption. We constantly read of single phrases and texts being the instrument in driving men to become monks, as St. John the Calybite, who when a mere boy read in the Gospels, 'He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,' and immediately ran away from home, and entered the Sleepless order of monks, so called because they took turn at divine service day and night so that prayer and praise might ceaselessly ascend.

This common practice of singling out special phrases suggests a further consideration in understanding our Lord's teaching, namely, that our interpretation must take into account the form and method He constantly adopted. There was an impressive pregnancy in His manner of teaching, which seems to have been chosen by a deliberate principle, which Wendt[1] calls the principle of aiming at the greatest clearness in the briefest compass. He depended sometimes on startling antitheses, or sudden appeals, to gain entrance into men's minds. He often put His judgments and instructions in crisp, pointed sentences, which made them specially memorable. He selected cases of illustration, which brought out in the most vivid relief the deep religious truth He wished to inculcate. He did not weaken

[1] Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. i. p. 130.

the force of the principle by needless details, or explanations, or modifications, which would apply in different circumstances. It was not a system of precepts to be rigidly followed according to the letter, but a system of principles by which His disciples were thrown back upon conscience. He refused on many occasions to give the definite advice asked of Him. He spoke in parables, that men might be forced to make their own interpretation, and face up to their own moral decisions. He would not, for example, adjudicate on the claims of wealth when a question of inheritance was earnestly asked.[1] If He had, it might have been true for that instance and not for any other; and in reply He stated a principle about wealth which is true for all time. So, in all these passages of an ascetic colour which we have quoted, the deep eternal principle, which Jesus undoubtedly meant to enforce, is the imperious claim of the Kingdom of God over men, a claim so unique that a man must allow nothing to stand in the way, either of his entrance into the Kingdom, or of his duty towards it afterwards. But it is evident from His teaching that our Lord never contemplated that the possession of worldly goods, or intercourse with earthly relatives, or ordinary social life, were in themselves irreconcilable with the highest life as citizens of the Kingdom. It is the profoundest of religious truths that a man must give the complete and loyal devotion of his heart to the

[1] Luke xii. 13.

highest spiritual ends of the Kingdom of God, so that the solemn word will always remain true, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.'

But to see how foolish it is to assume that such a saying must necessarily mean the rupture of the ordinary parental ties, we need only think of some other scenes from the life of Jesus, such as that one where He displayed the most righteous scorn at the Pharisaic quibble which made it possible for a man to neglect an aged father or mother.[1] Times may come when a man has to choose between obeying a higher law, and displeasing an earthly parent, as such times came to all the early Christians, whether they had been Jews or pagans. They had to break off from the past, and had to risk the domestic and social ruptures, which all such adherence to new truths involves. This alone is enough to explain the tone of urgency, and almost stern warning, with which Jesus spoke of the inevitable conflict between His faith and the prevailing traditions and prejudices and established beliefs. He knew that He was sending fire on the earth, and was introducing what would bring division and not peace in a surface sense.[2] He knew that the faith must produce cleavage even in the closest relations of life, dividing father from son and mother from daughter; and in such conditions it was a true judgment which declared that no one was qualified to be a disciple

[1] Mark vii. 10 ff. [2] Luke xii. 49-53.

of His, who was not prepared for the sacrifices that were bound to come. A correct estimate then of these hard sayings about renunciation must not only consider the eternal spiritual principle which underlies them, but must also take into account the fact that they were spoken with reference to a period when severe conflict between the new and the old was inevitable.

That he did not ask for the dissolution of the ordinary relations of life as necessary for discipleship, is evident from the view He took of marriage as absolute, ennobling and consecrating it as a divine ordinance, 'What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.'[1] The truth is, that in coming to a decision as to our Lord's position regarding this great problem, we must take the whole tenor of His teaching, and the spirit of His whole life, if we would not misunderstand Him. When we do this, we find that the ascetic position is a complete travesty of His gospel and of His own manner of living. He showed no stoical contempt for the necessaries of life, and did not take up an attitude of defiance of nature. He did not say with the Stoics that men should make themselves independent of bodily needs—He simply and naturally accepted the fact of these needs, saying tenderly, even in a counsel against over-anxiety, 'your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of them';[2] while, on the other hand, His teaching was utterly

[1] Mark x. 9. [2] Matt. vi. 32.

opposed to anything like Epicureanism, which made these an end. He did not depreciate the body. His whole life was full of loving ministrations to the physical wellbeing of others, healing the sick, going about doing good.

Apart from His teaching we need also to consider His example; for Jesus taught by what He was, and what He did, as well as by what He said. He did not live as an ascetic Himself. He Himself tells us that He was reproached that He was unlike John the Baptist in this, and was called 'a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber,'[1] because He did not practise the austerities which John had made familiar. Nothing could be more illuminating on Christ's life in this respect than that criticism, which He accepts as marking Him off in the popular mind from John. He knew that He was misunderstood, and that He laid Himself open to grave objections, by refusing to lay stress on the outward rules, which the Pharisees and the disciples of the Baptist thought so important. To Him the heart of John's teaching was his call to repentance, his proclamation of the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven,—the camel's hair raiment and the leathern girdle, and the food of locusts and wild honey were only accidentals, though they affected the popular imagination so much. Both the Pharisees, and the people generally, understood John, whether they were influenced or not. They understood the type of piety for which he was so eminent; but they

[1] Matt. xi. 19.

stumbled at the carelessness for such external forms which Jesus displayed. They could not reconcile the high demands of holiness which He preached, with the sweet and sunny and natural life He lived. The description of the current impression which His life created, as opposed to the ascetic character of John's life, is a fair description of our Lord's whole career viewed from the outside. The records are full of His social intercourse with all sorts of people, rich and poor, saint and sinner. He accepted invitations to feasts; went to a marriage; sat down to dinner with hospitable Pharisees; was a frequent visitor at the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany. He had the instinctive human longing for companionship, which made Him desire to have some of the disciples with Him at the great crises of His life. No one can read the gospels with an unprejudiced eye, without feeling how preposterous is the ascetic contention that it is based on the requirements of the Christian life. 'To an ordinary layman the life of an anchorite might appear in the highest degree opposed to that of the Teacher, who began His mission at a marriage feast.'[1]

Further, He did not impose on His disciples ascetic rules. We learn, for example, that the disciples did not fast, which was a recognised religious duty of the time—indeed, they were taken to task for the neglect by the disciples of John the Baptist, who show by the form of their question their surprise that Jesus

[1] Lecky, *European Morals*, ii. 111.

should allow such laxity. 'Then came the disciples of John saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?'[1] In His reply Jesus defends His disciples, though without blaming John's disciples for fasting. 'Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the day will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast.' The principle of the answer is that men may fitly fast, when the outward form is in keeping with a real and natural feeling, in some sad season of their life, or some solemn crisis; but He would not encourage any formal, forced, or unnatural rite, out of harmony with the simplicity and joy in which His disciples lived. To create wilful mourning would have been foolish and sinful.

It is remarkable, considering the high place as a rule of religion which fasting afterwards took in the Church, that there are only two passages[2] in the gospels which indicate our Lord's attitude towards fasting: the passage above quoted, in which He explains to John's disciples why His own disciples did not fast; and the passage in the Sermon on the Mount, where He condemns the ostentation with which the Pharisees fasted, 'When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they dis-

[1] Matt. ix. 14.

[2] The reference in Matt. xvii. 21 (Mark ix. 29), *καὶ νηστεία* ('and fasting') is an addition of later MSS., due to the growing ascetic spirit in the Church. This is the case also with the references in Acts x. 30 and 1 Cor. vii. 5.

figure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret.'[1] The very references show how little such things bulked in His view of religion. He did not prescribe forms of fasting or set times, because to Him such forms were an offence, unless they corresponded with the inner state of mind and heart. Nor did He condemn fasting altogether as essentially wrong, but rather implied that there would be occasions when it would be natural. He ever laid the emphasis on the spiritual condition, not on any external forms whatever. A similar situation to the complaint about neglect of fasting occurred in the matter of ritual ablutions. The Pharisees complained, 'Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?'[2] The answer is an attack on the external forms of purification and sanctity in such favour with the Pharisees, a condemnation of the external method of attacking the problem of sin, which indeed is the mistake of all kinds of asceticism.

Jesus not only did not impose ascetic rules on His disciples, but also He did not ask all men who believed on Him to forsake their ordinary work and follow Him, as He asked the inner circle of disciples

[1] Matt. vi. 16.

[2] Mark vii. 5, and also Luke xi. 37, where the charge is brought against Jesus Himself by a Pharisee who was His host at dinner.

to do. The special calling of the disciples was a practical necessity for the doing of the work He designed. Jesus asked others to remain in their place in life, and bring their faith to bear on all the circumstances of their lot. When the demoniac who had been cured prayed that he might be with Him, 'Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.'[1] The disciples were called on to make sacrifices for the gospel's sake, but neither in their subsequent practice, nor in their teaching after the death of Christ, do we find anything to indicate that they imagined that their Master had intended an ascetic community.

The Apostles did not inaugurate a system of renunciation of the world. Their epistles are full of counsel about the practical affairs and the common relations of daily life. The epistles assume the ordinary social conditions, and show the Christian faith inspiring these with a new spirit. We gather that the Apostles sometimes took their wives with them on their missionary journeys; for St. Paul claims the right to do so as well as the other Apostles.[2] St. Paul's natural temperament was ascetic, and he was ready to practice self-denial even in things which he counted lawful; but he refused to make such a rule of Christian ethics. More than once in his epistles, after proclaiming the

[1] Mark v. 19. [2] 1 Cor. ix. 5.

Christian faith as a principle of life, he goes on to show it fulfilling itself in elevating and ennobling the social and domestic duties and relations, husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant.[1] He does not imagine these natural relations as evil, but looks upon the faith as transforming and purifying them, exhibiting its power on the common levels of life. We find his fullest and highest thought on the subject of marriage in the great passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where he compares it to the spiritual union of Christ and His Church.[2] The relation of marriage is glorified by the comparison, and is declared to be a vital unity of which love is the nexus, a state in which neither party is complete without the other. Even in the later New Testament literature there is no suggestion of ascetic rules, but rather the protest against them grows stronger as heresies came into prominence. Thus in the First Epistle to Timothy, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, are classed with the 'doctrines of devils.'[3] The epistle gives no ground for the law of clerical celibacy, since deacons and bishops are to be husband of one wife, and to rule their household and children well.[4] One of the deepest principles of the teaching, and it is in line with the whole Biblical view, is that the world should be used, not abused, and that God has given His children richly all things to enjoy.[5]

[1] Col. iii. and iv.
[2] Eph. v. 22-33.
[3] 1 Tim. iv. 1-3.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 2-12.
[5] *Ibid.* vi. 17.

Besides being opposed to our Lord's manner of life, asceticism is opposed to the very spirit of His gospel, which came as an Evangel, a message of joy and good tidings. It was the revelation of God as the Father, and, since men were called to enter into communion with God, it was also the revelation of the infinite worth of the human soul. It is this spiritual relation to God, which is the heart of Christianity. It is not a religion of particular commandments, and explicit statutes, requiring certain things to be done and other things to be avoided. It lifts men out of the region of rules into the region of principles. It is spiritual communion with God, and so is pure religion itself, the ultimate religion, beyond which the soul of man cannot go. The fortunes of religion therefore are not bound up in any form, ecclesiastical or practical, and Jesus attached no importance to any external rules in themselves. They were not so much opposed, as transcended by Him, and treated as matters of indifference. He did not ask His disciples to practise certain ascetic commandments, as if these would infallibly bring spiritual blessings. What He did ask was singleness of heart, a tranquil, simple faith in God, which would keep them calm in all circumstances, and set them free from the bondage of the world.

The Christian faith does not believe that the ordinary blessings of life are evil, or are worthless; rather it looks upon them as given by the gracious

love of our Heavenly Father, who knoweth that we have need of them. Men must not lose their hearts to any of these earthly things, just because of the larger love which is opened up to them. They are to seek first higher things, the Kingdom of God; they are to live in humble sweet natural dependence on God, using the good gifts of His providence as not abusing them. All things, earthly goods, earthly relations, the earthly life itself, are to be consecrated to the great interests of the Kingdom. That the Christian life demands self-denial Jesus taught distinctly. If the will is to be sanctified and submitted to God, there must be strenuous self-control and sleepless discipline. He demanded from His disciples the willingness to renounce personal gratification, and if need be for the Gospel's sake give up everything, even life itself; but that is not a general system of renunciation as a religious method, such as asceticism means. Christian sacrifice is not a self-inflicted thing to produce some spiritual good, as if perfection could be achieved by any external form. We have seen that there may be a formalism in the practice of ascetic rules, more deadly to the soul than any other formalism. Self-denial must always have a place in the Christian life, if need be to the cutting off a hand and plucking out an eye, though at the best that is to enter the Kingdom maimed; but to look upon mortification as in itself a virtue is a perversion of our Lord's Gospel. What He asks for is love, not the painful austerities which minister

to spiritual pride. He asks men to accept God as their Father, and live humbly and sweetly in the light of that fact. He asks men to live in the same filial relation as He did, to come after Him in spirit, in spite of the ambitions and desires that war against the good, and in spite of the evil of the world. To come after Jesus needs prayer and care and discipline, as all who have bent to the King's Highway of the Holy Cross know; but most of all it needs, and this is the centre of His message, a heart at rest, a heart fixed on God in simple trust and humble love.

Nothing so completely reveals the consistent attitude of the New Testament toward this whole subject as the petition of the Intercessory Prayer, 'I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.'[1] In face of full knowledge of the bitter hatred and cruel malice of men, and of their moral insensibility and passive opposition to spiritual things; and in face of full knowledge of the subtler danger to true life in the numberless seductions and alluring temptations that clamber at the heart, the prayer accepts the situation as the proper environment of Christian life. It was first of all *for the world's sake*. The choice and training of the Twelve meant only the small beginning of the Kingdom, the first reddening of the dawn, the faint flush along the eastern sky. To pray that the disciples should in

[1] John xvii. 15.

any form be taken out of the world would be to give up the work at the start, to falsify the past, and to relinquish the future. It was also *for the disciples' own sake*; for discipline is just the process ordained for disciples, and character is no hot-house plant. There is a form of piety which has many attractions to the meditative contemplative temper, withdrawing itself from the rough work-a-day world, and spending itself in devotions. There is a sweetness of mind, and an attractive culture of spirit, to be got in retirement; but that may not necessarily be a sign of a strong character. The ungenial surroundings, the untoward lot, the very temptations, may be the condition of a man's sanctification. The ordinary relations of life, with their duties and responsibilities, with their trials and sorrows and joys, are the divinely appointed environment to develop character, and to train disciples into robust vigour of life. It is easy to keep the hands clean by keeping them from work, and easy to have a kind of refinement of soul by shirking contact with the coarse outer world; but the secret of life can never be attained by moral cowardice, and never by the selfishness which would disentangle the life from the lives of other men. Jesus desired for His disciples the culture of character, which comes from the good fight of faith in the world.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

THE two opposing methods which we have been considering reflect the conflict in human nature, the facts that seem to contradict each other; and each of the methods ignores the other side, and is blind to what does not tell in favour of its particular theory. Self-culture is really based on a form of optimism, which gaily assumes that nothing more is wanted but the harmonious and joyous development of all the powers existing in man. It has infinite faith in natural education to draw out latent capacities of power and joy, and so to make life sweet and sane. Self-restraint as an exclusive method is essentially a form of pessimism, which has little faith in the natural, and has no confidence that, even if the best means of culture be used, the result will be of much value. It is so impressed with the presence of evil in man and in the world, that the harmony is always turned into discord; and it sees no hope for ultimate good, except by heroic measures for the extirpation of the evil. Whatever be our special sympathy with either of these extremes, according to our particular

mood of mind, we must accept the facts on which both are founded, if we are to approach anything like a full and true solution. We can accept what each asserts, without being bound to follow each in what they deny. We bow to the Hebraic preaching of the necessity for moral discipline, and also to the Hellenic gospel of the love of the beautiful and the joy of living; but we need not assent, when Culture makes light of sin as if it did not exist except in some morbid imaginations, or when Restraint rejects the fairest flowers of natural joy and human genius.

The facts which give force and weight to the æsthetic ideal are unimpeachable, and every fresh soul that enters the world instinctively expects its share of what seems its natural birthright of light and joy. No doleful pronouncement of 'vanity of vanities' will convince the heart of youth that the world can be only a diabolic instrument to ensnare the soul, and that the rich powers of mind and imagination and heart are only to be discarded. If repression be the secret, then its task is unending; for it would need to be begun again with every new life, which comes endowed with the same keen zest for the mere act of living, and with the same deep instinct for self-expression. The ascetic ideal also takes firm stand on facts, and experience only increases their force, and adds to their number. No surface scheme of culture, however garishly it paints the prospect, can for long cover over the ugly symptoms, and hide the evil taint in life. Nor can

it even secure the happiness it promised, having no protection from the blows of misfortune, and no safeguard against the inevitable disillusionment. The pain and sorrow of life are facts to the believer and the unbeliever alike; and all that unbelief can do, at its best or at its worst, is to rob the facts of their redemptive purpose, and empty them of any intelligible or moral meaning.

Whether we have any prospect of reconciling them or not, our first duty is to admit the deep-seated antagonisms of human life, to accept the conflict in man's nature, the combined glory and penury of his life. To be true to all the facts, we must see amid the nobility and achievements traces of the sordid and base; and also see a soul of good in men and things evil. This is the Christian position, the simple acceptance of both sides, looking with clear eyes on the whole situation. On the one hand it rejects the rose-coloured optimism, which is wilfully blind to the tragic facts, and which sees in history and experience nothing but easy steps of progress towards perfection; and on the other hand it rejects the blank denial of pessimism, which means despair of good, and in the final issue means unfaith in the divine element of the world and human life. It sees sin in man, but its last word is not sin but redemption. The world is full of menace to good, a place of trial and discipline, but it is God's world, with beauty, and truth, and joy. To see how completely the antagonisms of life are accepted, we need

only think how the heart of the Christian faith can be expressed by the word *Reconciliation.* Its very purpose was to reconcile, and bring together, all that stood in unnatural opposition through sin. Its work is to reconcile man to God, and man to man, and all the diverse unrelated parts of man's nature with each other in a centre of unity. All the discord is changed to harmony by reconciling man to God; for with that all other reconcilements come. The deepest thought of Christ's teaching and life is simple confidence in God, as seen both in the world and in human life, recognising Him in nature and in man. This consciousness of the divine takes precedence of all else, and becomes the great inspiring motive, driving the life to noble ends, and at the same time putting everything into its rightful place in the large scheme. A faith like this rises above any seeming contradiction between elements, such as the contradiction between reason and faith, or between culture and restraint as opposing ideals. It solves the problem, not by denying one side, but by carrying both sides up to a higher point, where the practical contradictions are merged in a principle of life. There can be no true victory, except by a real reconcilement, by showing the place of both in the plan of life—never by a policy of extermination on either side, either by culture affecting to ignore the moral appeal of sacrifice, or by restraint ruthlessly trampling on the legitimate claims of the other. It must be by a reach forward and upward to a larger ideal.

Historically this was so; for Christianity reconciled Hebraism and Hellenism by a form of knowledge and of ethics that was made accessible to all classes and races, leaving the old battlefield behind. The struggle in Palestine, which was referred to in our first chapter, between the sons of Zion and the sons of Greece, seemed doomed to end in the complete triumph of Hellenism, which could only have been a barren victory. When the champions of Jewish religion were the Pharisees, with their hide-bound formalism and ecclesiastical pedantry, no other result, however, was to be expected; for all that they could hope to do was to preserve a little section of the world in some shady corner outside of the great stream of civilisation. It seemed a lost battle for Israel, till the hopes of the true Israel revived in Christ. His religion conquered the world, indeed saved it from despair and death, and gave it new youth and new life. The gospel of culture, which was all that Greece had to offer, could only at the best gild the outside of life, could only direct taste, and adorn the cup and platter: it could not redeem the world from sin, and chain the beast in man, and deliver both Greeks and barbarians from a reprobate mind. Hellenism had to go down before the higher ideal of Zion, but it was not the form it took from the hands of the Pharisees that accomplished the victory; but from One who was neither son of Zion nor son of Greece, but both—because Son of Man. It was no narrow, sectional, parochial Zionism which overthrew

the might of Rome and the grace of Greece. It was the gospel of the eternal love of God, wide as the needs of man, for Jew, and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free.

It begins in the deeps of human nature, dealing with the heart of hearts, cleansing from sin, reconciling man to God, and then setting him to live the reconciled life. It is not a scheme of culture, nor a system of philosophy; but *religion*, founding itself on moral sanctions, fulfilling the law and the prophets, enforcing the obligations of duty, bending the neck to a yoke, even pointing to the glory of a cross; all because it brought man into a new relation to God, which made any moral demands easy and any commandments light. And its end is not the curtailment of life but its enlargement, so that there is room for the development of every gift of brain, and heart, and soul; for it takes the whole man, affording each gift a higher platform from which to work, elevating and inspiring them with a new and larger ideal. At its historic introduction we see it enriching life to men, bringing the broadening of opportunities, and the expansion of powers. It lifted forward the life of man with a great impulse, giving even to the most degraded undreamt of possibilities, making a slave a free spiritual being, leading him out in spite of his serfdom into a large place. It ennobled life to souls in the narrowest surroundings. It changed the face of the world, revived the outworn pagan life, making all things new.

It is so still even in our Christian age. The narrow lot of man is broadened whenever he comes into the filial relation to God, and there is always in it the potency of continual expansion. It introduces a new motive power which changes the current of life, and offers a new outlook which changes the standpoint of life. This enlargement of life through faith is a fact of experience, which all who have bent to the strait gate know. First of all it comes as an enlargement in the life of thought. Reconciliation with God should mean sympathy with, and therefore insight into, all His works. Just as monotheism, the revelation of the One God, meant for the world an almost infinite intellectual advance beyond the conceptions of lords many and gods many of Paganism, so the further revelation of the character and nature of God means an almost infinite intellectual advance to the mind that will fearlessly and consistently accept it, as Kepler said of his astronomical studies, 'I think the thoughts of God after Him.' Faith enlarges the horizon of life, leads out of narrow contracted views of the universe to the acceptance of all truth. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are open to the believing mind; for they are all broken lights of God in whose light alone we see light. 'The invisible things of Him, since the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made.'[1]

But the horizon of life is broadened chiefly by

[1] Romans i. 20.

means of the enlargement of heart. It is not merely the gain in a truer and higher standpoint, and is more than an intellectual conception unifying the whole universe by the thought of the One God, the eternal immutable will which combines all phenomena, and all laws, and all groups of laws. The enlargement of life to the individual comes rather as an emotional force than an intellectual. The consciousness of God changes the world to a man. We lie at the outer porches of the pool of life, a great multitude of impotent folk, blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; and to know the love of God is like the entrance of the Good Physician with His word of power, 'Rise and walk.' The Christian faith touches the heart with love, and so gives the life a new buoyancy. The world ceases to be the scene of petty deeds and trivial events, and becomes a wide theatre of action, in which man plays his part before high heaven. Everything takes meaning and purpose from the great motive: duty is ennobled by the new spirit in which it is faced. The things done may be the same small ordinary details of living, but they are glorified by being done for love. That is why throughout the ages it has ever been possible, nay easy, for men, if need be, to suffer for the sake of Jesus. In the midst of outward loss, with the cutting off of earthly joys, with the shutting up of worldly prospects, with the narrowing of life all round, there has ever been to His followers an

enlargement of life, a deepening and broadening of the true sources of life, and even a joyous exultant sense of victory through Him that loved them.

And the enlargement of life which thus comes is not a temporary thing, like the high-water mark made by a river in a time of flood. It remains a permanent possession to the soul. It is not a mere emotion, which uplifts the heart in a spasm of feeling, and then deflates it when the feeling passes. It registers itself on the whole life; for it carries with it a moral and spiritual enlargement, as well as an intellectual and emotional. It means an increasing power to be and to do, a true expansion of life as well as of the mind and heart. The Christian faith is ever a state of becoming; the goal is the perfectness of God, and every advance in the scale of being is a stage towards that high end. Christ gives a man power to *become*, opening up new possibilities of thought and feeling and action. The psychology of it is just the introduction of a new motive of love in the heart, which carries the life forward with a rich sense of freedom. We have already seen in our consideration of the failure of the ascetic method of dealing with sin, that the Christian attitude is life in the spirit, not futile battling against physical conditions. If a man lets love reign in the heart it will give power in the life, lifting it to higher levels of moral dignity, with victory over sin, and mastery of weakness, and a simple strong fulfilment of duty even when there

seems little pleasure in it; for instead of pleasure there comes joy, filling the channel with a full flow 'brimming and bright and large.'

In all Christ's teaching on self-denial it must never be forgotten that it always meant to Him some larger good. Self-repression was always a stage to a truer self-expression; any giving up of self would result in the true finding of self. Thus, some common statements of the method of Christ are so onesided as to make them caricatures of His method; for they leave out of account the great positive end. The end is not a broken, wounded life, but fulness of life, true life for the first time, so large and full that it can be called even here eternal life. It is not the process which is to be judged, but the object achieved. To say that religion means shrinkage and the attenuation of life, is to consider a few peddling details, and to be blind to the result. The result is not ebb, but flow. The work of religion must be judged like all work, by the product not by the process; and this at least is true, whether it be in accordance with the actual facts or no, that Jesus set forth as the fruit of His faith not the decrease of powers but their development, not atrophy but growth, and that He aimed not at the contraction of life but its extension. We are easily deceived about this, because we look so much on the externals. We see religion making a man give up this and that, curtailing here and there, sometimes we see even what looks like cutting

off a right hand and plucking out a right eye; and we are inclined to think that religion means the weakening and impoverishing of life. But faith can dispense with much of the outward, just because it enriches the inward. Even when it seems to mean restraint on the surface, it deepens the real life, and brings the joy of expansion. When it appears as the absolute loss of life as men count loss, its express purpose is the gaining of life. To be open on the side of God, responsive to spiritual influences, is to have unclosed a larger and ever larger world of thought, and feeling, and aspiration.

What was a speck expands into a star.

Restraint, in Christ's thought, is always a stage to a truer culture, a completer saving of the life. He asks for obedience, and when we obey we discover that in obeying Him we are obeying the law of our own life: He asks for service, and when we serve we learn that His service is perfect freedom: He asks us to lose our life, and lo, in losing it we find it.

Part of the message in the great Christian thought of dying to live is that a man through the death of his narrow selfish life enters into the larger life of love and service of others. This is one of the deep reconciling ideas, which combine the antithesis between culture and restraint, and explain many of our difficulties. We have seen how the ideal of

self-culture failed often, because it led to selfishness and a disregard of social duty. If self-realisation be pursued for its own sake, we cannot wonder that we should often find as the result, a narrow exclusiveness, and sometimes an inhuman egotism. We have to admit the force of the same criticism passed on the ascetic ideal when looked on as an end. One of the causes of its failure is due to ignoring the duty of service, which is really a distinctively Christian method of dying to self. This social side of life represents a task of religion, just as surely as the duty of personal sanctity. Indeed in their deepest roots they are both connected, so that the one is impossible without the other. To dream of keeping self unspotted, after having wilfully cut off relations with other men, shows a lamentable mistake as to what true holiness really is.

Men do not exist as single entities, each separate in the inviolable sanctity of personality; they exist in society, dependent on each other, bound together for weal or woe. Civilisation is a social thing, and is only possible through society. Any return to nature, either in the name of religion or in the name of philosophy, as French writers before the Revolution preached, means putting the clock back to the beginning again. To break down human society to its original atoms would lead to anarchy; and the whole toilsome journey would need to be made over again. Man has grown to his present

intellectual and moral stature through the social relations; so that to renounce them would not only make an end of further progress, but would also lose for us all past gains. Voltaire said wittily about Rousseau's doctrine that he preached the return to nature so eloquently that he almost persuaded men to go on all fours. The witty remark cuts deeper even than Voltaire meant; for any return to nature in the sense of cutting the cord of society would indeed be a descent to the animal state. Any voluntary withdrawal from the social bond is, at once a wrong to a man's own best life, and a social offence. It does not surprise us to find in reading the *Lives of the Saints* that many of the most devoted of anchorites lost the highest attributes of manhood, as we see even from books that are carefully edited to show people the sanctity attained by them. It does not surprise us also to find that monasticism easily beat out of the ground all forms of anchorite life, though monasticism after all was a compromise, and the other was the only true logical position. Still monasticism was able to endure, while the other dwindled, simply because it included to some extent the task of service to the world, in addition to the task of personal holiness.

Withdrawal from the world in any form, whether for the exclusive culture of self or for ascetic discipline, runs counter to the instincts implanted in us, that we need society, that only through

contact with our fellows can we reach our best life. To be cut off from sympathy with ordinary life, from common fellow-feeling, is a loss which nothing can compensate, not the finest culture of mind, and not even beatific vision. Men have tried all sorts of modified ways of reducing the social contact, and thus escaping defilement. Take, for example, the gift of speech. We know well the necessity for restraint here; for we know the evil of a wayward tongue, and we know that speech represents temptation like every other gift. Men have been so conscious of the countless ways in which language may be abused that they have sometimes thought the way out of the difficulty was to give up speech altogether. St. Bruno, the founder of the great Chartreuse Monastery, made silence one of the rules of the order. According to this rule the tongue was only to be used in the service of God, not in ordinary conversation with men, the purpose being to avoid much of the sin of the world. How false the conception which underlies this is we can see, even if it were a successful method of reaching holiness, which it is not. Speech is the medium of all knowledge, all social education, all civilisation, all that lifts man above the beasts. The inherent falseness of asceticism is seen here, as if God could be glorified by wilful refusal to use a gift with which he has endowed man. It implies a breakdown of the very principles of human society; and even if such methods were successful in keeping a man

unspotted from the world, it would be by sacrificing the whole for the good of a part. It would be the selfish seeking of personal good by throwing overboard humanity.

To recommend self-sacrifice on selfish grounds is to take away any moral value an act of virtue has, and would be at the best prudential morality. Sacrifice is ennobled by love, and is degraded when love is absent. Self-denial when reduced to a system may become a subtle form of self-assertion, as truly as self-culture can be. A life may be full of asceticism without any true sacrifice in it; for if love be absent from sacrifice, though a man give his body to be burned it profiteth him nothing. A religious method, which is anti-social in its tendency, leads to a *reductio ad absurdum;* for no method can be truly religiously successful, which lands its followers in a selfish way of living. It shuts the eyes to social duty, and certainly gives ground for the sneer that religion is only another form of selfishness. If love be the bond of perfectness, that implies social privilege and social duty; for only through others can love be truly developed. It cannot live in a vacuum, without objects on whom affection and service are expended. The higher parts of our nature remain starved and stunted, if we refuse the social burdens and ties, whether for a self-absorbing scheme of culture or for a method of purity. 'Entangle not thy heart with any creature,'[1] says À Kempis, but

[1] *Imitatio Christi*, Bk. II. chap. viii.

it is part of the divine education of life that we should be so entangled. The sweetest and noblest qualities of human nature, sympathy, charity, patience, friendship, love, are alone developed through the ties that bind us to our fellows, in the family, the Church, the state.

This spiritual culture in the higher graces is attained, it is true, often through self-denial, but it is self-denial in the midst of the relationships of daily life; not by inventing artificial discipline, but by accepting the ordinary occasions of life with their duties and responsibilities. This may seem a slow method, rather than the flashy one of cutting the knot altogether, but it is the only sure method, the only way a true and strong character can be built up. Emerson says with insight, 'There is a great deal of self-denial and manliness in poor and middle-class houses, in town and country, that has not got into literature, and never will, but that keeps the earth sweet; that saves on superfluities and spends on essentials; that goes rusty and educates the boy; that sells the horse but builds the school; works early and late, takes two looms at the factory, three looms, six looms, but pays off the mortgage on the paternal farm, and then goes back cheerfully to work again.'[1] If our hearts and lives were not entangled with others, we could never rise to the heights of our nature. It is true that our social environment implies temptation and danger, but that is insepar-

[1] *Conduct of Life*, chap. iv.

able from moral life, and only thus is the education of the heart made possible.

Even from the point of view of personal happiness, this is reached not by selfishness, but by the development of sympathy and love. Disinterested work for others, the cultivation of the unselfish side of life, will enlarge a man's horizon, and lift him out of personal cares, and save him from the pain of morbid introspection. This culture of heart, which is after all culture of character, is of more importance than intellectual development. It is also an ideal for all in a fuller way than culture of intellect can ever be. To comparatively few come opportunities for complete intellectual training, but all can practise unselfishness, the quiet fulfilment of duty, generous thought, and gentle deed. The instincts of pity, and help, and charitable emotion, find their scope in the common relationships and the social duties of life. The opportunities for true self-denial come in the ordinary conduct of life; and true sacrifice is all in the line of duty. It comes to a man when he must adhere to truth, when he must choose the higher and give up the lower at the call of conscience, when he must deny himself in order that larger interests than any personal ones may be served. The most powerful force in developing individual character comes from serving an ideal outside of self, not from seeking a harmonious growth of virtues and graces.

This criticism applies to both of the ideals we have been considering, but more especially to the

one which claims to be the distinctively religious one. A man cannot be said to be holy, though he has kept himself unspotted from evil, if with it all he lives a hard and loveless life, and if he has passed by the world's work and duties and interests; for holiness is not a negative state, but means attainment, character, increasing likeness to God whose nature is Love. The Christian salvation is social as well as individual: it could not really be the one without the other also. Our Lord's purpose was to found a kingdom of souls working out to social ends, a kingdom of men and women living in loving relation to each other through their loving relation to God. The Christian faith in God carries with it as an inevitable consequence the service of man. The training of the twelve, to which Jesus gave most of His public ministry, was not an end in itself, but a means to a greater end. The Kingdom of Heaven was like leaven put into meal till the whole should be leavened. Pure religion and undefiled is designed, not only to preserve good men from contamination, but also to save the world.

When the ideal of religion does not include the active practical life, it means an immense loss to the world, as has often been proved in the history of the Church. The number of hermits and cœnobites of Egypt in the fourth century seems incredible. They covered the desert in thousands, mostly living in monasteries, though many of them as solitaries. It was irreparable loss to the world, as it has been

down the Christian ages since, of so many of the best citizens, men and women who were in earnest, who really desired to serve God, and whose standard was high above that of the world they left. Some of the wisest of the Fathers saw this danger of loss to the Church and the world, and strove to show that all gifts of the Spirit were given to be used on behalf of others. The gathering of ascetics under monastic orders was indeed a piece of early Church statesmanship, that they might be brought under discipline, and be utilised for service. Chrysostom, himself a monk, and who was profoundly impressed by the ascetic ideal, condemned those who lived in solitude without a sense of responsibility for others, condemned Christians who take possession of the mountains instead of taking possession of human life. 'How shall we conquer the enemy,' he asks, 'when some have no care for virtue, and those who are interested for it, retreat to a distance from the order of battle?'[1] The withdrawal of sincere Christian life from actual contact with the world is an irreparable loss to the world. When the finest spirits live only for their own improvement, whether that be of mental or of spiritual powers, instead of employing their gifts for the common good, the result cannot but be fatal to everybody.

The recognition of this by the leaders of the Church made them encourage monasticism as the Christian ideal rather than any form of hermit life.

[1] *6th Homily on 1st Ep. to Cor.*

The thought of service was never quite lost sight of, though it was often in danger of sinking to a very secondary position. When Gregory of Nazianzen and Basil were young men studying at Athens, they decided to abandon the great worldly prospects which lay before them, and yet they felt the extreme form of withdrawal to be only a disguised sort of selfishness, and so they chose the compromise which included the opportunity of service. Gregory speaks of two ascetic disciplines, that of the solitary or hermit, and that of the secular, the first thinking only of some personal good, the other the larger good of others. The monastic life to some extent combined both, offered seclusion and retirement, and yet did not exclude the sweet ministry of love which is so essentially Christian.

> I saw when men lived in the fretful world,
> They vantaged other men, but risked the while
> The calmness and the pureness of their hearts.
> They who retired held an uprighter port,
> And raised their eyes with quiet strength towards heaven,
> Yet served self only, unfraternally.
> And so, 'twixt these and those, I struck my path,
> To meditate with the free solitary,
> Yet to live secular, and serve mankind.[1]

This purpose of service was in the minds of many who chose this life, withdrawing from the engrossments of the world, in order to be of greater service to the world.

Even though we may condemn the particular

[1] Newman, *Historical Sketches*, vol. ii. p. 57.

historic form it took in the monastic system, yet we must remember that the same two notes found in Gregory's decision must be combined for the highest kind of social service. The qualifications for the best usefulness are detachment and sympathy, an aloofness of spirit, if not of life, along with sensitiveness to the needs and sorrows and sins of men. It is only the man, whose own personality has been enriched, who has any real contribution to make to the wealth of the world. Capacity for service ultimately depends on the fruitfulness of the self. This is the distinct place for all kinds of culture, not as an end in itself, but as means to the wider end of service. Social betterment in any true sense, as more than the mere rearrangement of external conditions, can only come from individual character and intellect. The production of that is a primary duty, even for the sake of others. A man's contribution to society will mean all the riches and resources of his nature, his heritage of race, and personal capacity, and education. Social good will be advanced, not by impoverishing the self, but by letting it grow to its full stature, by doing the work best fitted for the special talents, and by giving them the highest education possible. Everything, of course, will depend on the aim and spirit of the culture. There are dangers, some of which we have seen in discussing the Defects of the Æsthetic Ideal,[1] but these dangers must be faced, and they can safely be

[1] *Ante*, chap. iii.

faced with this religious thought of the consecration of gifts; for the religious ideal of service will save a richly endowed personality from his besetting temptation of the selfish use of his powers. The artistic temptation, to look upon life as affording material for art, will be dispelled by the larger and deeper thought of serving men, rather than of using them even in that refined sense.

The same is true of the spiritual detachment, which the ascetic ideal embodied so fully. All the outlets of human activity are meant to be laid hold of by Christian men, and made sacred by sanctified use. No seeming victory over indwelling sin can make up for the terrible waste of power for good, which might make the desert of life blossom like the rose; and any such victory, unrelated to the actual conditions of life, is more apparent than real. True self-control is to be got in the midst of the struggle: it is not mutilation of natural desires, but the subordination of each desire to the good of the whole man, and ultimately also to man as a social unit. It is the task of life to acquire the wisdom which can do this well, which can live in the world, doing the duty of the world, accepting all the responsibilities and temptations of the situation, and yet untainted by the evil of the world. The Kingdom of God is the great Christian end. Service is the Master's last word for the instruction of His disciples. They are to go unto all the world; and the command is not only extensive in its sweep but also intensive in its

working. The sphere of the Christian activity is the whole range of human life, bringing love to the world's woes, and love also to the world's work. A loveless saint thus becomes a contradiction in terms.

We have here another illustration of the way extremes meet; for we find both of the ideals leading men to shut themselves off from the sordidness of the world in some form of isolation, the one for the development of mental gifts, the other for spiritual contemplation, both neglecting the practical call to consecrate all gifts to service. Complete self-culture and complete holiness are alike impossible without social service; for the atrophy of the highest parts of our nature results from any selfish plan of life. Any scheme of self-culture, or any scheme of self-denial, is no true end for man, and are at best means towards a higher end. Self-denial can often be justified as being for the sake of a higher self-culture, and can always be justified when inspired by love. In the ultimate issue self-culture also can only be so justified. Culture is but the polishing and sharpening of an instrument to make it serve for the best work. Extension of knowledge, refinement of feeling, education of taste, and all the noble results of culture, may minister to a subtle selfishness, but they may legitimately be sought that we may be qualified for the better service of life. Certainly culture, which would be Christian, must come under that law,

which is the law of the Christian life. Love and holiness are the two strands, and without love holiness cannot be, since love is the fulfilling of the law. The Christian heart must serve, must bend to duty and all gentle ministry. There may be an aloofness of soul, the unspotted mind, the exalted life, combined with humble service of men—nay, there must be both of these elements, found in such perfect harmony in our Lord Himself. Wordsworth, in his great sonnet on Milton, expressed this combination of a noble life—

> Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
> Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
> So didst thou travel on life's common way,
> In cheerful godliness; *and yet thy heart*
> *The lowliest duties on herself did lay.*

How true it is, that love must test all life, is seen even in the narrower sphere of the subject-matter of art itself, and the spirit in which it must be produced. Great art is not done for beauty's sake alone, but for the sake of humanity. It is not art for art's sake, as is the common cant of some art circles, not even art for truth's sake, as Browning amended the phrase, but art for love's sake. If the artist forgets to think of how it affects human life, if he withdraws himself in spirit from the vulgar throng, if he loves beauty for itself, if he puts away from him the opportunity of serving mankind, if he has no desire to give strength or consolation or dignity

to life, he ends in losing beauty itself; for beauty cannot survive when love is dead. Thus we see that the empire over men in art is given to the man who knows love, and interprets it, and illustrates it. It is an unfathomable subject, one that cannot be exhausted. It may be the common love of a mother to her helpless child, which is all that many Madonnas ever suggest, and yet which makes them great art still. The empire over men in life also is given to those who know love, who move us by their tenderness, and sympathy, and gracious ministry. When art loses its touch with life, no mere technical excellence, no mere skill with colours or with words, will save it from emptiness and failure; and when religion loses its touch with the needs and duties of life, no interior lights, and sweet consolations, and ecstatic visions, will save it from degradation.

Culture for its own sake, and sacrifice for its own sake, are neither a sufficient end, but they each find scope, and are made reasonable, by the great Christian thought of *service*, which reconciles so many difficulties which meet us in this whole region. With such a dominating motive as service there will be room for all types of personality, and for all individual capacities however divergent. We will see the need for self-restraint, discipline, and for the sterner qualities, supposed to be associated only with Puritanism; and, on the other hand, if we recognise that the end of all our training of our powers is for service, we will not limit the thought

of service, as narrow Puritanism so often did. We will know that it takes all sorts of men to make a world; and if they be true men serving the commonweal according to capacity, it does not matter much where and how they serve, or in what department of work. There are many and various kinds of service; and their rank is settled, not according to the type of work, but according to the spirit in which it is done. This principle of service does not mean that all must become professional or amateur philanthropists, but it does mean some form of consecration of gifts. The artist and poet serve by creating their works of beauty or of inspiring song, and to ask them to leave the sphere for which they are specially endowed, in order to work in a city slum, would be folly. The world can much easier do without some of the practical energy, which indeed it never lacks, than it can do without the vision of the prophet, and the imagination of the poet, and the beautiful creation of the artist—all the intellectual and spiritual thought with which thinkers and seers feed the true life of their fellows. Much of the best labour, wrought out of the brain and heart of a man, has no direct reference to the welfare of men, but we cannot measure its indirect value in kindling thought, and deepening feeling, and awakening aspiration. It is not dull uniformity in what is called charitable work that is needed, but spiritual consecration that will make all work sacred because inspired with a noble motive.

The primal duties and gentle charities that bless men will not be omitted, for such a conception of service will give the tender touch upon all life, the loving pity for men. The true moral of the brevity of time is not the one Pater draws [1] of gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch by the stirring of the senses, to experience a thrill from strange dyes or strange colours or curious odours. Because life is short, the highest course open to the children of men is not to grasp at any exquisite passion, nor even to seek some personal gain of culture—there is a better part mentioned by Amiel, whose mind had an even finer culture than Pater's: 'Life is short, and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us.' It is at least a nobler view, and will save life from ever sinking to the depths into which the other sometimes plunges it.

Difficulties there will always be in reconciling in detail the duty of culture with the equally imperative duty of self-restraint. It is not possible to extricate matters in our complicated life, and draw a hard and fast line. It is difficult to say how far a man, who wants to keep his garment unspotted, should go in the matter of intercourse with the great mass of things which seem to lie on the border-line. So much in the world is in itself morally neutral, and can become good or evil according to the way it

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 65.

is treated. When the choice is between what is evil though alluring, and what is good though difficult, it is easy to know at least *how* the decision should go; but all the practical difficulties are not so easily disposed of. When the choice lies between the two courses which are both good, such as when duty to self seems to conflict with duty to others, the problem is harder. For example, a man may see a chance of doing the kind of work he likes best, if he will only cut himself off from certain irksome domestic obligations. Is he to choose that which will give himself greatest pain without considering what will bring the greatest amount of good? Or is he to say, according to the common philosophy of culture, that the theory which requires of him the sacrifice of the larger experience into which he might enter has no real claim on him?

It is not possible in a general statement to give a solution for all cases, apart from the particular circumstances of each special problem; but in concrete cases the ordinary conscience of man finds little difficulty in pronouncing judgment. It would condemn Goethe for his treatment of the different women with whom he successively fell in love, but for none of whom he would take any risk of reducing his opportunities for calm self-development. It would condemn Romney for his conduct to his wife.[1] He came to London, leaving behind at Kendal his wife and two children, one son, and a baby daughter

[1] *Vide* Tennyson's *Romney's Remorse.*

who died, meaning to send for them when he had secured a position. Fame and fortune came to him, and he gave himself with intense devotion to his art, and became the most fashionable portrait-painter of his day. For thirty-five years he lived in London, but never sent for his wife. He had been told that marriage spoilt an artist, and there would also be in his mind the shame of presenting his country wife to Lady Hamilton whom he painted so often, and other grand people. In his old age, when helpless and desolate, he returned to her, and she forgave him, and nursed him till he died. There is a standard of judgment, with which the heart of man agrees, which will confirm Edward Fitz-Gerald's verdict, that this quiet act of hers is worth all the pictures Romney ever painted.[1]

Every serious man must decide for himself in all the doubtful cases which emerge in life when culture and restraint seem to conflict. No one can take from another the responsibility of settling the numerous problems, for instance, about amusements, about compliance with custom, about certain forms of art and literature. It is a safe general principle which delegates decision to an enlightened conscience: 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the things which he alloweth.' This too must be added, that for true judgments, as for useful influence, we need not so much a scrupulous as a tender conscience,

[1] Fitz-Gerald's *Letters*, p. 102, and *vide* James Smetham's *Letters*, p. 101.

that thinks, neither of selfish satisfaction, nor of frigid rectitude of conduct and satisfied inward approval, but chiefly of loving service. We must not let ourselves be deceived by specious questions of casuistry, which only obscure the issues.

The love of God in Christ unifies life for us, and shows us the way out of difficulties as they arise, if we are loyal to conscience. As love increases and faith deepens, a man comes to see God everywhere, in the world which is made beautiful and sacred by His presence, in all human love which is a reflection of the divine. Perfect moral health is a state in which self-consciousness is forgotten, and a man desires simply to do God's will. When a heart is motived by the love of God, and a life is inspired by the consciousness of God's presence, the needful restraint becomes easy. The surrender of self to the will of God makes all necessary self-denial not worthy to be mentioned. In the interests of this great self-surrender some may need to practise a self-sacrifice that will look like the mutilation of life, but that is only appearance. The obligation will always rest on a Christian to give up all that is contrary to the mind of Christ, but when the heart is filled with love of good it finds no pleasure in evil. It does not mean any narrow deprivation of anything truly human; for the Christian life is inclusive, subduing all spheres that belong to man.

The Christian religion is the progressive grasp of the whole contents of human life, taking possession

of every department of thought and activity, conquering and assimilating all forms of human development. Historically, it took the philosophy of Greece, and absorbed it, and gave it a new lease of power because it put it on a permanent basis. It took the imperialism of Rome, and directed it into a new sphere, when Roman power was crumbling away. It took the humanism of the Renaissance, and gave art a new birth. It took the political and intellectual freedom of the Reformation, and made them religious. It is taking the science, and politics, and social movements of to-day, and will direct them to large and noble ends. It solved the problems of the old world, and will solve our problems, because nothing human is alien to it. It is a principle of life, and has its undying power in the present realisation of God in the world. Its task is to make the secular life of man sacred, and to transform the natural into the spiritual. It gives added worth to all human things, asserting that there is nothing common or unclean in the life of man that cannot be adorned with a new splendour. This is why the ascetic conception of life is radically false. Allowing for a useful side in occasional protest, the normal Christian life is not that of the anchorite in the desert, or the devotee in his cell. The normal life is that of citizens of a Kingdom of Heaven, working out to positive results. The religious spirit must express itself in the actual world, in creating institutions which shall make for righteousness. Its ideal

is that the so-called secular pursuits should be done in a religious spirit.

For a full character and a perfectly rounded life there are needed both of the elements in the two rival methods we have been considering. The stern temper, which takes self-discipline as a serious task of life, may blossom into beauty, with an eye for all that is fair, and true, and good. The ideal of manhood includes both, as Wordsworth portrays the perfected result of Duty—

> Flowers laugh before thee in their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads

We think of the harmonious life of Christ, the complete balance and poise of His character, the unrivalled combination of qualities, wisdom and simplicity, strength and tenderness, the perfect adjustment of life to the divine will, the simple assurance of God, the wonderful symmetry of life, genial and winsome in spite of sorrow, with instinctive joy in all true loveliness, taking delight in the birds, and the flowers, and little children, though the shadow of the cross lay athwart His path. There have in their measure been many followers of His, who have found in Him the secret of possessing their souls without cutting themselves off from anything that is pure and good, combining a certain spiritual aloofness with many-sided touch of the whole round of common life. In Christ there is room for the fullest self-expression—nay, for the first time He makes that

completely possible, because He saves it from corrupt forms which would bring decay and death. Secure at the heart, held by love to Him at the centre, the life can swing round a wide radius. He subdues us to Himself the Highest, and sets us to the task of total perfection for self and for the whole world. There never was such a scheme of culture set before men as that to which He pointed: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.'[1] He preserves the Hellenic spirit from degradation and from selfishness, by bringing to it faith in God as a motive, and service of man as a task. He saves the Hebraic spirit from formalism, and the futile following after an external law of righteousness which ever misses the mark, by giving the law a new spirit, the spirit of faith, and love, and perfect freedom. Through Him the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to it. In Him alone could Israel, which did follow after the law of righteousness, find that for which she sought—the way to the Father. In Him, too, all our particular difficulties in the region we have been discussing, which is that of the whole relation of the Christian to the world, will be practically solved, if we can say with St. Paul, even in echo: 'I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'[2]

[1] Matt. v. 48. [2] Gal. ii. 20.

It is religion man needs, not culture in itself. So the birthplace of modern civilisation is not Athens, but Calvary. The 'pale Galilean' has conquered against all the full-blooded gospels of the natural joy of life, but conquered in the grandest way of conquest, not by the extermination of the opponent, but by changing the enemy into a friend. When the sons of Greece are not against but for the sons of Zion; when all ideals of culture find their inspiration and nourishment in the divine ideals of Jesus, and take their place in the great loving world-purpose of the world's Saviour; when thought, and art, and literature, and knowledge, and life are brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ, that is the true victory.

'*Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!*'

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